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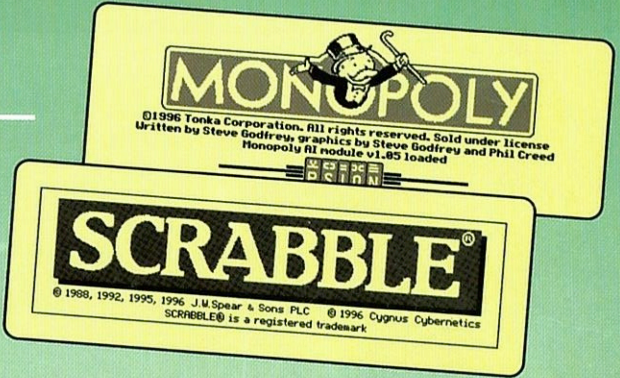
Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Issue 9 **Bimonthly**

Psion's new BIG GAME offerings—exclusive pre-release reviews inside!


MONOPOLY
PSION
SCRABBLE®

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Written by Steve Godfrey, graphics by Steve Godfrey and Phil Creed
Monopoly AI module v1.05 loaded

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An electronic guide for PSION Series 3a and 3c
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designed for PSION

108 pages of news & reviews!

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(Volume 2, issue 3)

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Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Palmtop is...

Steve Clack - Publishing Editor

Pete Sipple - Associate Editor

Rosemary Rolfe - Distribution Manager

Thanks...

...To all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine, particularly Steven Murgan, Leigh Edwards and Rick Andrews for their regular contributions. Thanks also to Chris Love at Clove Technology for various contributions and supply of review material, and to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

Address

All requests for subscriptions or back issues and any comments or criticisms regarding the content of *PALMTOP* should be directed to the editor at the following address:

Palmtop Publications
25 Avocet Way
Bicester
Oxon OX6 0YN
ENGLAND

Tel: +44 (0)1869 249287 or fax: 246043
or: e-mail 100602.3723@compuserve.com
or: *palmtop@aol.com*

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General

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Editorial

Talk of the new 3c and Siena machines has been running wild in recent weeks. The Internet newsgroups and Psion discussion forums are full of debates on the pros and cons of the new products, including a pile of complaints about all the things Psion should supposedly have included in the 3c but didn't.

Some people's expectations seem just too great. Take for instance the issue of upgrades: can we really expect Psion to offer to take back our old used 3a's in part exchange for a shiny new 3c? I think not. Just try it with your PC/TV/dishwasher/car, etc.

Some people are mistaken about the functionality of the 3c too. Many have complained that the improvements over the 3a are 'not enough'. Why do so many existing users automatically think that the 3c is something they should (or would want) to trade in their 3a for? Surely Psion are more importantly trying to attract those who don't already own a palmtop computer? Unless Psion can successfully target the people with 'paper organisers', competing palmtops and people in countries where Psion is not yet established then the future of the company can never be assured, and our investment in their products is less secure.

The 3c is a fine machine in itself, and anyone contemplating the purchase of a 1Mb or 2Mb 3a should look carefully at the added value of its new features. It's very much of the same family as the 3a though, and 3a prices have now dropped (at least in the UK) to a level that should make potential purchasers think seriously about *both* options.

If you are a 3a owner there is no cause to worry about the extension of our coverage to include the 3c. The machines are so alike that 99% of 3a software runs on the 3c anyway, and although programs written in OVAL (see page 73) will not run on the 3a, we have yet to see the emergence of the software development kit, let alone any software.

The amount of coverage we give to the Siena within *Palmtop* really remains to be seen. The expansion potential of the machine is obviously limited by the lack of SSD slots, but a few software applications have been ported from the 3a already, and one or two even work without alteration. It'll be interesting to see how things develop...

Steve Clack - 20th October 1996

Palmtop News

The latest hot gossip on what's happening in the Psion world

More *Palmtop* changes

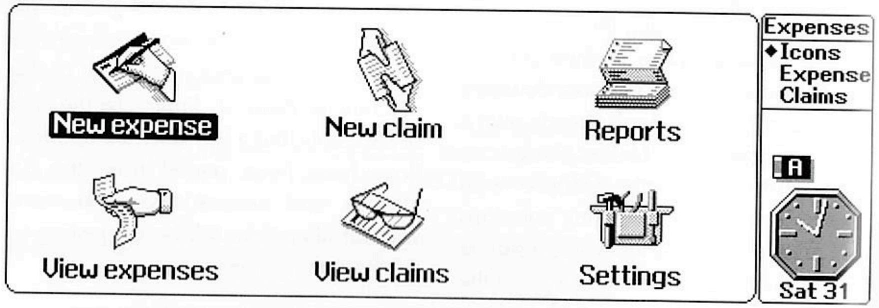
Keen-eyed readers will notice that the *Palmtop* logo on the front cover (and elsewhere) now says '*The* journal for today's Psion user' rather than '...for Psion Series 3 and 3a users'. This reflects the expansion of our coverage to include the new 3c and Siena machines released in September.

Please note too that we are now officially called 'Palmtop Publications', and that all subscription cheques should be made payable to that name.

Psion release bug fix and new drivers.

Early versions of the new Series 3c and Siena *PsiWin* package contained the wrong version of a DOS resource file. If you have the new v1.1 of PsiWin, want to use RCOM, and your PsiWin disk 1 is dated before 2/10/96, then you need to obtain the patch released earlier this month by Psion. Another file to look out for is the add-on infrared printer driver for the Siena, something that was left out of the Siena's ROM due to space constraints. Finally, software developers may want to get hold of two short WORD files which describe the fundamental differences, at a code level, between the 3a, 3c and Siena. The names of the three files released by Psion are RCOM.RSC , IRPRINT.ZIP and SDK96.ZIP respectively.

Psion Customer Services
tel: (0990) 143050, fax: 561046



Psion's new Personal Expenses

New hardware from Psion

Several new hardware products are due for release from Psion over the coming month or so, including a new 14.4kbps 3c-compatible portable modem at £199.95 (inc. VAT), a PCMCIA modem adaptor at £99.95 and an external SSD drive for the Siena at £79.95.

And software too...

Psion's Agenda Synchroniser software has now been released, priced at £59.95 including VAT. We have already evaluated an early version of this, but could not persuade it to function reliably. We will feature a full review of the production version of this software in the next issue of *Palmtop*.

More software is due from Psion in time for Christmas. This includes their version of the popular Scrabble board game at £49.95 (inc. VAT) on SSD, and a Monopoly game at £39.95 on SSD or £29.95 on PC floppy disk. Both products are reviewed elsewhere in this issue. A dedicated personal expenses package is imminent too, at £39.95 on SSD or £29.95 on floppy disk. We have seen a pre-release version of this, and will be featuring a full review in issue 10 of *Palmtop*.

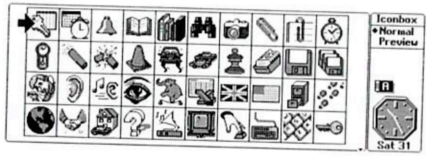
We don't yet have a firm date for release of the long-awaited Internet connection software from Psion, although it is likely to be before Christmas. Expect more news next issue.

Finally, a number of additional products are in the pipeline. These include the general release of an 8Mb flash SSD, and a version of the Berlitz Interpreter software for the Siena. Siena releases of other popular programs are also likely.

Purple Bridge cancelled, but Toolkit II and Notepad Deluxe imminent

Due to technical difficulties Purple Software have indefinitely cancelled the release of their long-overdue Bridge game.

Two new products are due for release in November: *Toolkit II* and *Notepad Deluxe*. Toolkit II includes *IconBox* (pictured above), which is a pre-



designed icon library previously available as shareware; *FileView*, an ASCII/binary file viewer that handles large files; *SysInfo*, a systems diagnostics utility; and *DataSafe*, a file backup program.

Notepad Deluxe is the commercial incarnation of Pelican Software's earlier *Notepad* product which has been available as shareware for some time now. We have already seen pre-release versions of both products and will be featuring full reviews next issue.

Toolkit II will retail at £49.95 inc. VAT and Notepad Deluxe at £69.95.

Purple Software
tel: (0171) 3877777, fax: 3871188

Plan goes commercial

The widely acclaimed project management package for the 3a/3c, *Plan*, is now being marketed as a commercial package by Yellow Computing in Germany. This version will be available in addition to the shareware variant. The Yellow version has an additional 'Task View' not included in the shareware version, allows up to 8 resources instead of the shareware version's 4, and comes with a printed manual. *Plan Deluxe* is available at £69.95 (inc. VAT), and the shareware version is still £15.

Yellow Computing
tel: +49 71 369511-0, fax: 369511-11

New Widget Timebase

Widget Software are shortly due to distribute a new version of the Timebase software previously available from TCS. Timebase 6 allows users to keep track of billable time for multiple clients, and offers comprehensive reporting facilities. Price is £69.95 inc. VAT on SSD or £49.95 on PC floppy disk. Expect availability from November, and a full review in the next issue of Palmtop.

Widget Software
tel: (01438) 815444, fax: 815222

New Lost Treasures

An update to Interdata Developments' *Lost Treasures of Infocom* adventure game collection is now available. The new version includes the Microsoft Windows version of the interpreter, together with four new additional games on disk.

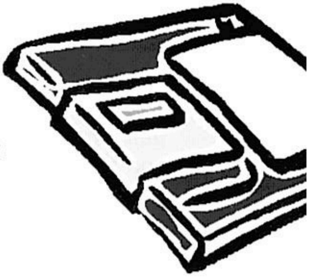
Interdata Developments
tel: (0161) 7922871, fax: 7922114

New-style Exportech SSDs

Exportech are now offering new style RAM SSDs that allow 5 minutes to change batteries without loss of data.

Exportech
tel: (0181) 6823313, fax: 6824414

Shareware Shorts

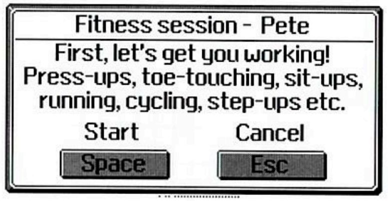


New software for the Psion range of machines comes out every day. Pete Sipple takes a look at what's new since Issue 8....

Get in shape...

Leading light Steve Litchfield has made another major contribution to the Psion community in the shape of **Fit4life**. This compact program works by measuring your pulse (by pressing the spacebar), comparing the results against a table, then rechecking your pulse after exercise.

The help file contains some very detailed advice on managing stress, eating habits and quality sleep. The text is well written, sensible, and makes you think seriously about your health without preaching.



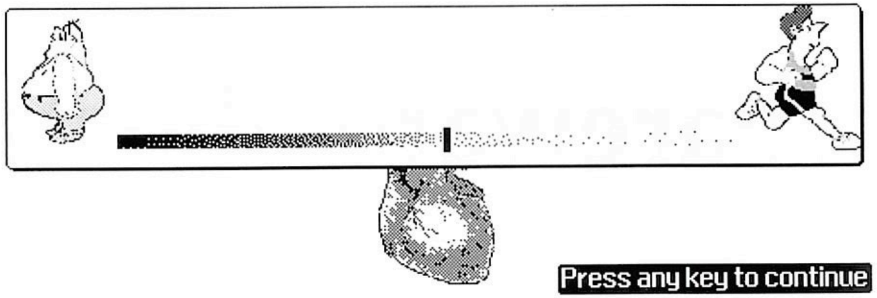
Fitness session - Pete

First, let's get you working!
Press-ups, toe-touching, sit-ups,
running, cycling, step-ups etc.

Fit4life is freeware, will run on a Series 3a, 3c, Siena and WorkAbout, and comes with language modules in English, French and German. Check out **FIT4LIF3.ZIP** (28K in size)

You've sunk my battleship!

Another classic game makes the transition to the Series 3a/3c. This version allows you to play against the computer, selecting a 'fiendishness' level. You take five shots in the enemy's grid in an effort to locate concealed aircraft carriers, destroyers and frigates, and a battleship. The computer then takes *its* five turns,


Press any key to continue

More fit, less fat—Steve Litchfield's Fit4Life

and the last boat afloat wins. Since its release a matter of weeks ago, this program has been one of the most-downloaded games. Not the most impressive of the recent games I've seen, but it's easy to play and is very popular. **BSHIP120.ZIP** (45K)

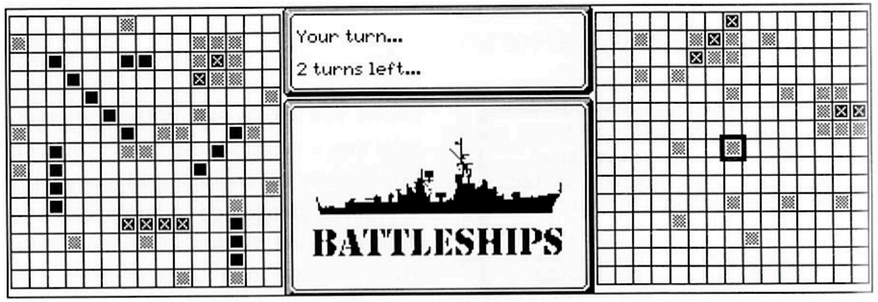
Go-faster stripes...

Not got a Series 3c or Siena? Feeling left out? Worry no more! This file contains various GRP and ALS files to allow you to replace the icons on your 3a with the new-look Siena ones. The text file explains the easy installation. Once installed, impress your friends with these new 3D Siena icons—if you're that kind of person. **NEWICONS.ZIP** (24K)

So, what else is new?

Quickview is a fast and compact Psion PIC file viewer that works on the 3a/3c and Siena. It supports black and greyscale images and adjusts to all screen sizes. Free! **QUICKVIEW.OPA** (just 3K)

Mastermind v1.02. This is a pure logic puzzle based on the 'coloured pegs' board game of the same name. The computer picks a random combination which you have to crack. A small and simple game that's freeware. **MASTER.ZIP** (4K)


Your turn...
2 turns left...

Solitaire, the classic board game (not to be confused with the single-player card game of the same name) can now be played on your 3a/3c. This freeware comes with 13 alternative arrangements. **SOLITAER.ZIP** (*sic.*) (5K)

FigureIT V1.25 for the 3a and Siena describes itself as part financial calculator, part currency converter, and part unit converter. **FIGUREIT.ZIP** (34K)

QuikCalc V2.25 has one purpose: to bridge the gap between your Psion and Intuit's *Quicken* finance package. Create QIF files on the Series 3a, 3c and Siena. **QUIKCALC.ZIP** (51K)

Updated since the last issue:

Mapper v4.6 has been released. Mostly minor changes, plus an increase in the number of town plans to 67. To upgrade this incredibly popular program, look for the upgrade file **MA43UP46.ZIP**, or the whole thing on **MAPA46.ZIP**, **MAPB46.ZIP** and **MAPC46.ZIP**. (several hundred Kb for the full program)

ShopList V1.09—as well as allowing percentage discounts and markups, the program now accounts for 'multi-buy' discounts. **SLIST109.ZIP** (31K)

Pong V3.1, the original tennis game has had some new touches added, and some bugs fixed. **PONG.OPA** (8K)

JBCIS v1.2, the freeware reading/replying add-on to *ReadCIS* handles the communications with CIS, and now has spell checking and thesaurus and the ability to read long mail messages. **JBCIS.ZIP** (45K)

Updates to two of the finance packages: Version 1.8d of the ever-popular **S3ABANK** is now available, **S3ABANK8.ZIP** (260K), as is **BankPlus v2.1** with new archiving and graphing options. **BANKP21.ZIP** (34K)

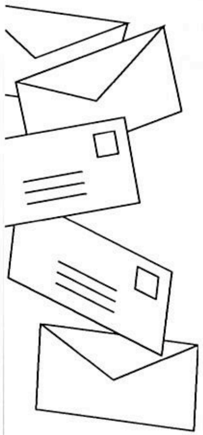
P.K Spencer's **PassAgn** now has password encryption, **PASSAGN18.ZIP** (9K), and **TIMMN341.ZIP** (40K) has also been released with some new features.

Siena...

Since the Siena's release in September, software authors have been working hard to port their programs onto this new machine. Some programs have been modified to run on all machines, whilst some have needed a re-write. Here are a few programs that are now available for the Siena:

Mastermind - MAST102.ZIP
Fit4life - FIT4LIF3.ZIP
Quikview - QUIKVIEW.OPA
BankPlus for Siena v1.0 -**BANKS10.ZIP**
S3ABank - SNABANK0.ZIP.

If you can't find a particular piece of software mentioned above, or you think there's a program that I've missed, please e-mail me at petesipple@aol.com



Readers' Letters

The author of the most interesting letter submitted for issue 10 will win a free leather case or a Winlink3 CD-ROM

PRIZE LETTER - Not quite a readers' letter in the true sense of the term, but Mark and Gill Tennant of Capel Betws Lleucu, Wales, win a leather case for their amusing (and topical) image on page 13...

But what if you lose it?

Dear Palmtop,

As with many Psion owners, I am always being told that electronic organisers are "all right but what if you lose it?" I always turn the question around and ask them "What if you lose your filofax or other paper system?"

I have suffered both sorts of losses and the electronic one was by far the easier to recover from. I reported the loss of my Psion computer to the Police, claimed for the loss on my insurance policy and reloaded my backed-up data into the new machine, which was 95% back in business within a matter of minutes.

Don't forget that a lost paper organiser is lost forever—no-one I know backs up their filofax! So even if you are lazy and don't do backups as often as you should, you are still way ahead of your paper-bound colleagues.

Nigel Montagu
Nottingham

A disappointing review?

Dear Palmtop,

I look forward to each issue of *Palmtop* and have found it very useful. That must be stressed first to put things in context, but I found the 'Banking on your Psion' article very disappointing.

Back in issue 3 you published a piece by Steven Shone about Psion Money ('Money, Money, Money'). He really knew what he was writing about, and gave a wonderfully clear account of what Psion Money could do for you and what its drawbacks were.

The result was that I immediately went out and bought Psion Money, and have been using it daily for well over a year. And yes, I agree with everything that Steven Shone said. And can add a few pros and cons of my own: the manual is a model of what manuals should be—short, and very clear; the maximum number of standing orders (49) is inadequate for me; it handles budgets very well but will not give a total budget figure; file compression needs to be automated. But above all, foreign currency handling needs to be improved.

Steven Shone's article mentioned Banker (from Pelican Software) as a possible rival to Psion Money. I downloaded the demo version of this from CompuServe, but it was too crippled to make any comparisons. So I then bought the full version and gave it a trial for a week or so, but went back to Psion Money. There were big drawbacks with Banker that ruled it out for me: it wouldn't do budgets, and it was not a double-entry system (essential for real accounting). It was too fussy and its manual was dreadful.

So I was counting on the long-promised *Palmtop* article to bring me up-to-date on all the major financial packages. How well would they handle foreign currencies? Budgets? Standing orders? How intuitive to use? How configurable by the user?

I didn't get answers to any of these questions. And your review of the one package I know (Psion Money) was mistaken in several respects. Although the terms 'asset' and 'liability' can't be changed (do they need to be?), anyone who is confused by technical terms such as debit and credit can substitute their own (see page 19 of the manual). Splitting transactions is not confined to VAT: any single payment covering different categories of expenditure may need to be split.

And, remarkably, you didn't review Banker at all, even though *Palmtop* issue 3 had mentioned this as the main competitor to Psion Money.

A quick skim over the surface of 5 financial packages really won't do. To do the job properly you'll have to give it more space, more time, and above all more understanding of the subject. Why not put Steven Shone to work on it?

Sorry!

But I'm still looking forward to the next issue of *Palmtop*.

Sir Tim Crawley-Boevey
Cambridge

Thanks for your comments Tim. Our exclusion of Banker from the review lineup was due to the fact that the current edition of the Psion Software and Accessories Catalogue says that

Banker is 'available in the USA only'. We have since found out that it is actually available from Clove Technology here in the UK, so this information was obviously incorrect. This was an error on our part, and we should perhaps have checked the availability of the product more thoroughly.

A new version of Banker is due out soon, and this will be distributed more widely outside the USA. At this point we will give Banker a review of its own.

It's important to appreciate that the scope of a ten page article covering five sophisticated packages is necessarily limited. In order to cover the depth you suggest we would need to devote perhaps 6-8 pages to each program, which is unacceptable for a single article within *Palmtop*. The intention of this article was to give a flavour for the general level of capability and overall feel of each package. The programs reviewed fell into an almost natural hierarchy of sophistication and functionality, and the brief of the article was really limited to making the reader think about where on this scale their own requirements fell, and which packages to look further into.

Many features like foreign currencies, standing orders and such are handled adequately by all of the packages reviewed (as summarised in the table at the end of the article), and it seemed fruitless to go into the depths of such features when space was limited.

Concerning the areas where I was supposedly mistaken, I *didn't* say that splitting transactions was limited to VAT, I feel that you may have misread the sentence. The intention of the discussion of assets and liabilities was to put into perspective that Money *is* in many ways more suited to the user with more serious requirements. I found this package a bit of a handful to get to grips with, so I'm sure a lot of more casual users will too.

The relatively 'quick skim' coverage of the article was limited by a need to keep the page count down to a realistic level. We will be featuring more in-depth articles on banking packages over the coming issues of *Palmtop*, and will do this as individual appraisals from a regular user's perspective. I hope that this kind of coverage better matches the kind of article you were hoping for-Ed.

Security advice from Psion

Dear *Palmtop*,

Thank you very much for the latest edition of *Palmtop*, very impressive and a valuable source of third party info for all Technical Support staff here in Psion UK.

Looking through your *Readers' Letters* section I have some information which may be of interest to your readers and therefore please feel free to publish in your next edition.

(continued on next page)

Stolen Psions

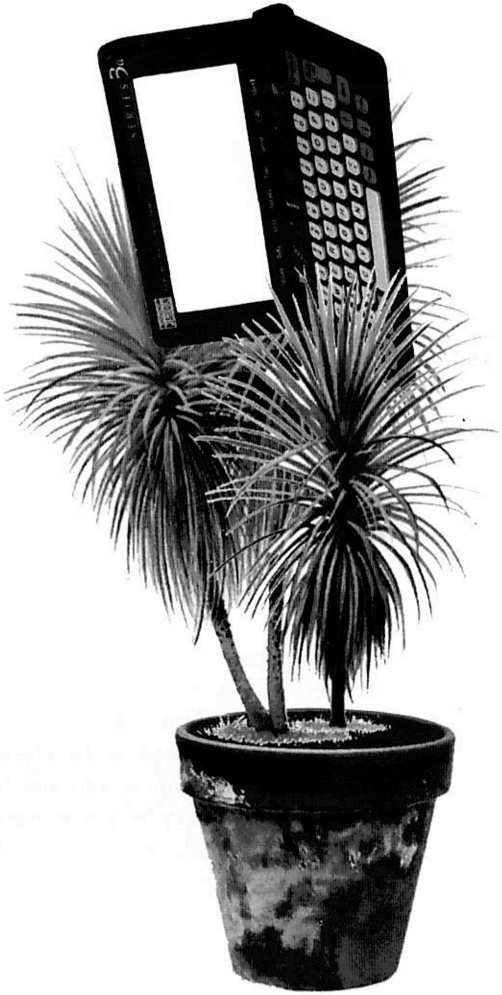
If customers have registered their machines with us we hold all the data from the registration card on a database, which amongst other things form the basis for our 6 monthly mailing of Psion User Magazine. There is the ability to record certain additional details on this database, and therefore if a customer has their Psion stolen they should write or phone Psion Customer Services and if they are on the database we can add the stolen details to the record entry.

If a person then calls and quotes the registration number, which is recorded as stolen, we innocently ask for their contact details and check the information with the listed owner. This has in the past resulted in one 'lost' machine being returned.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of password protecting your Psion. For most of us the data becomes more 'valuable' than the machine itself and therefore backing up and data security are two areas which all Psion and PC users should have as part of their daily routine!

An interesting anagram of 'palmtop' across the page—perhaps we should have it made into a tee shirt? - Ed.

Simon Derry
Customer Services Manager
Psion UK Plc



Who needs backlighting when you've got a 'potlamp'?

A Closer Look...

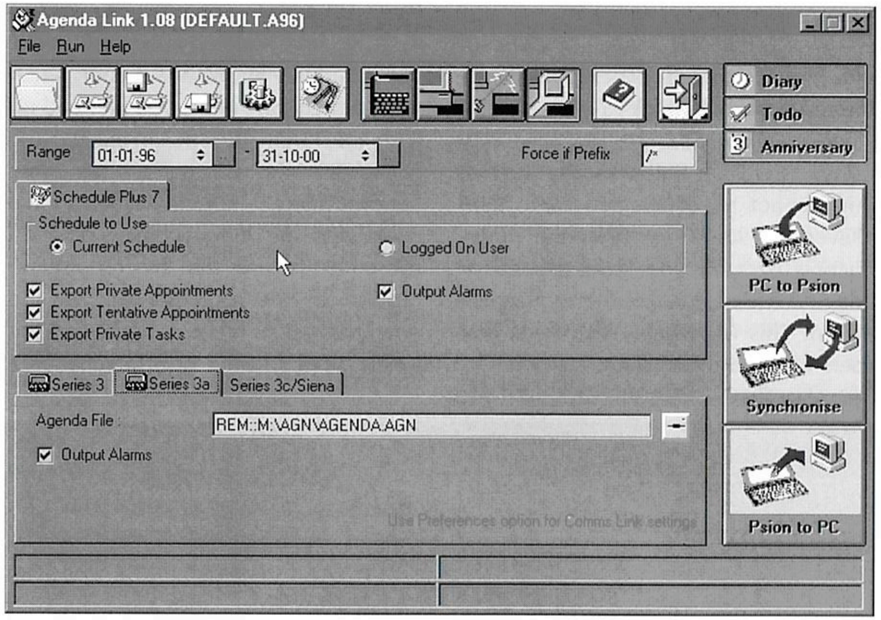
...at some of the newest and most
interesting products available for your
Series 3, 3a, 3c and Siena

Widget Agenda Link 2

If you are anything like me, you will have found Psion's AGENDA program to be an invaluable weapon in the fight to extract order from chaos. It lets you record appointments, things to do, anniversaries and much more. Conversely, for those of us who work in a modern office, the ability to share electronic diaries is a real time-saver. This can, however, lead to the classic 'two diary' dilemma: how can you be sure that your secretary has not arranged for you to be at a budget meeting with the finance director while you think you have the day off to play golf? The answer is to use a synchronising program such as Widget's *Agenda Link 2* in conjunction with the Psion *3Link*.

The latest version of *Agenda Link 2* supports the Series 3, 3a, 3c and Siena Agendas. On the PC side, it works with Lotus Organizer 1.x, 2.x and Microsoft Schedule+ version 1 and 7. There are actually two separate programs in the package, each with a slightly different user interface. The 16-bit version supports all but Schedule+ 7 which comes as part of Microsoft Office 95 for Windows 95 and NT. The 32-bit version, called *Agenda Link 96* supports *only* Schedule+ 7. The program runs completely on the PC and treats the Psion solely as a file server.

Let's look first at *Agenda Link 96*. The documentation is quite confusing because rather than supplying a new manual, Widget have kept the original manual and added a 15 page *Agenda Link 96* supplement. The online help is better written and reflects the new features, but I hope they will consider a combined manual for the future. The software comes on six 3½" disks so it takes a few minutes to load. It asks whether you want to install the new 32-bit software for *Schedule 7* or the original 16-bit *Agenda Link 2*. As I initially chose the first option, I only needed to load the first four disks. You can install both versions if you need to.



Range 01-01-96 - 31-10-00
Force if Prefix /*

Schedule to Use
● Current Schedule
○ Logged On User

☑ Export Private Appointments
☑ Export Tentative Appointments
☑ Export Private Tasks
☑ Output Alarms

Agenda File : REM::M:\AGN\AGENDA.AGN
☑ Output Alarms

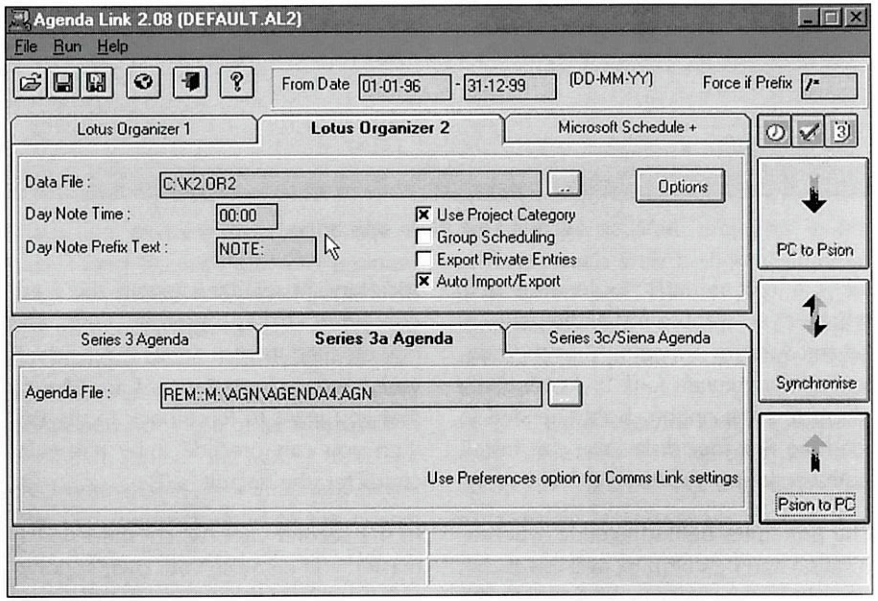
Agenda Link 96 in operation

The principles behind agenda synchronisation can be complex and this is one occasion when you need to study the manual before you use the software. The options here are to let the PC be the master, let the Psion be the master or let neither party be the master.

In the first case, appointments are entered into *Lotus Organizer* or *Schedule+* on the PC, perhaps by your secretary. At regular intervals these are converted using *Agenda Link* and downloaded to your Series 3 Agenda. If you have an appointment in Agenda that you want to force back to the PC, then you can precede it by a special character (the default is /*).

In the second case, where the Psion is master, you organise your own appointments and meetings on the Psion and the flow is in the opposite direction.

If neither party is master, then you may use the option to 'Synchronise by manually matching entries.' This transfers data between both the Psion and the PC file. All appointments that are in one diary and not the other are presented one-by-one and you can choose whether each one is kept or deleted. The files are thereby synchronised and the results written back to each system. *Agenda Link 96* adds the new capability of synchronising automatically so that you do not need to agree each item. Cleverly, it knows whether the difference is because you have deleted or added an item and takes the appropriate action. This is probably the mode that users will find most useful.



From Date 01-01-96 - 31-12-99 (DD-MM-YY) Force if Prefix /*

Data File : C:\K2.OR2

Day Note Time : 00:00

Day Note Prefix Text : NOTE:

☒ Use Project Category
☐ Group Scheduling
☐ Export Private Entries
☒ Auto Import/Export

Agenda File : REM::M:\AGN\AGENDA4.AGN

Use Preferences option for Comms Link settings

Agenda Link 2

To start using the system, you should backup your files and then do an initial conversion. This copies all the information from one system to the other but does not overwrite appointments in the target system. So, for example, if your Psion Agenda contains a budget meeting on Monday and Wednesday but *Schedule+* knows about your lunch appointment on Friday, you will end up with the Psion file unchanged but the *Schedule+* file will contain all three appointments. Once you have completed the initial conversion, you subsequently use the synchronisation option. In the example above, the synchronisation process finds that the lunch appointment is only in *Schedule+* and so copies it to Agenda. To-do lists are also copied. Incidentally, any memos attached to appointments or to-do entries are correctly transferred as notes into *Schedule+* or vice versa

although if you subsequently update a note the change will not be transferred back during synchronisation.

Settings allow you to select which Agenda file to use, and to choose whether to include or exclude any private appointments, tentative appointments, private tasks or alarms. You need to select which Psion type you are using here, and the 3c options include the new 57,600 baud rate and the ability to select whether 'private' or 'restricted' Agenda entries should be transferred to the PC. I could not test this feature as a 3c was not available to me at the time of the review. The settings can be saved as the default or saved into named files and recalled for later use.

In use, the conversion and subsequent synchronisation worked perfectly, taking 10-15 minutes for a pass. This is based on a 28Kb Agenda file and a 486 DX4/100 PC with 20Mb of RAM—it would of course run faster on a more powerful PC. You can do several things to cut the processing time: since each recurring entry is expanded during processing, you could cut down any that are no longer required; you could also reduce the size of your Agenda file by purging old appointments; finally, you could use a narrowed-down date range for the synchronisation.

There are some screen design idiosyncrasies that could have been tidied up by Widget. Date selection buttons and the calendar entry screen do not appear to be fully debugged as rather odd things can happen. It's best just to enter a six digit date, for example '010796'. Also, the screen layout is confusing for the new user. The large buttons on the right hand side represent the one-off 'Convert from PC to Psion' or 'from Psion to PC operation' but the Synchronise button does not say which of the four types of synchronisation it initiates. This is set on the icon tool bar at the top of the screen which includes buttons to 'Synchronise with Psion as Master,' 'Synchronise with PC as master,' to 'Automatically match entries' or to 'Manually match entries.' Unfortunately it's difficult to see that they are selectable radio buttons, or to see which is selected. I'd prefer to have these items set as a preference via a menu. There is no mention in the printed or on-line manual of how to set the mode or how to change the date range.

The simplest way to synchronise is to use the 'Synchronise' option which is set up when the program is installed, and runs the whole process based upon your saved default preferences.

Another minor problem was that I experienced occasional 'bad channel' error messages when I tried to run Agenda Link with the Psion unplugged.

The 16-bit part of *Agenda Link 2* works in a broadly similar manner. Again, it offers the option of automatic synchronisation. The author of the software is working towards a look-and-feel similar to that of *Agenda Link 96*. It would be best to have one program which supports a number of PC organisers rather than having a separate product for *Schedule 7*. The 16-bit code has been updated to support the 3c and Siena and works effectively, but there are a few minor niggles that the author is apparently working on. For example, if you set a date range from 1st January 1996 to 31st December 2000, Agenda Link reports that the end date is before the start date.

Incidentally, you can download the latest updates from the WWW at *http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/lexden*

The current product lacks support for synchronising the Psion DATA with the contact section of the PC organisers, which would be a useful feature.

To sum up, *Agenda Link 2* offers an effective method of synchronising your Psion with a PC diary. Although there are some design quirks, once mastered, it should prove effective. Support for *Schedule+ 7* is particularly impressive.

Kai Chandler

InfoBOX

Agenda Link 2 is available directly from Widget Software at £49.95 inc. VAT or £19.95 to upgrade from any earlier version.

Phone: +44 (0)1438 815444

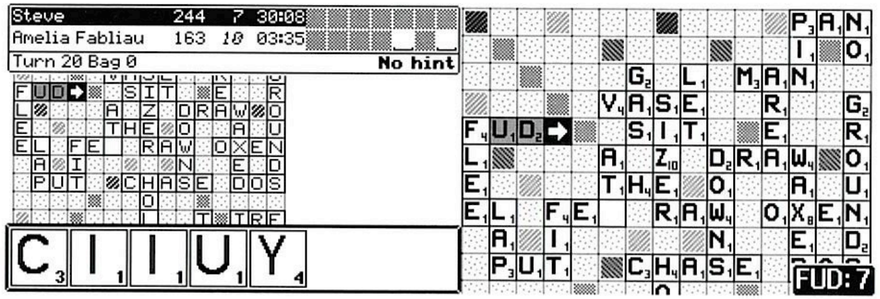
Fax: +44 (0)1438 815222

Scrabble

I have to confess that I've played very little Scrabble in recent years. The new Psion Scrabble for the 3a/3c is just *so* good that it has given me a renewed interest in the game, and may ultimately succeed in turning me from an occasional player into a real aficionado.

In terms of playability the 3a/3c screen of course fares poorly against a nice tactile board and tiles, but the Psion version works remarkably well in every respect, and the game plays exceptionally smoothly.

Part of the playability of the computer version can be attributed to the enormous number of configurable features Psion have decided to build into the game. Options begin with the ability to choose either one, two or three computer opponents to play against, chosen from a selection of 40 human-like players of varying skill, strategy and vocabulary. Each 'player' also has an area of specialist knowledge too: so you may, for example, choose to play against 'Jasper Collet, a Jeweller with a vocabulary of 7,659 words, poor skill and strategy, whose hobby is local history'. You could also pick a much more formidable opponent, such as 'Joseph Tort, a Barrister with a vocabulary of 80,448 words, excellent skill and strategy, whose hobby is squash'.


Steve 244 7 30:08
Amelia Fabliau 163 10 03:35
Turn 20 Bag 0 No hint

A game in progress

You can also elect to play against one of the ten TSP (*The Scrabble Player*) opponents instead. These all have *perfect* skill and strategy, but with varying vocabularies. If you are either incredibly good at Scrabble, or want to see how it *should* be done, then try playing against *TSP9*, with a vocabulary of over 142,000 words. Play was so advanced at the TSP9 level that I frequently found myself looking up unknown words in the dictionary. Several of these weren't in my 'Concise Oxford Dictionary', but I found them all in the Chambers' OSW (Official Scrabble Words) dictionary, which is the source of the 142,000 word list.

You can also choose to play against other 'real' human opponents, or even a mix of real and 'computer' players. Play between human opponents works just like the normal board game, except that all the scoring is done for you. Secrecy is maintained by requiring each player to press the spacebar to bring their own tiles into view whenever their turn comes around.

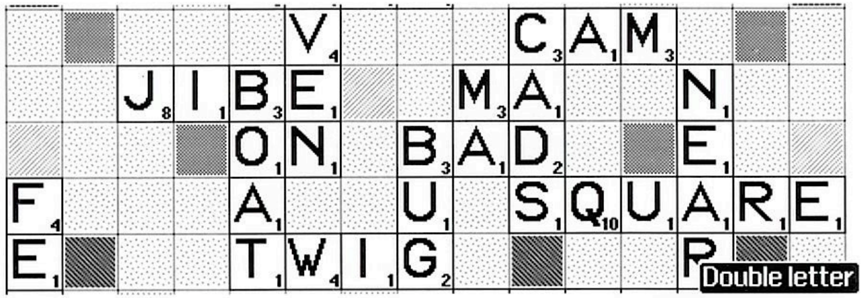
Six alternative game types and setups are available, and these are: *Practice, Friendly, Competition, Infinite, Rainbow* and *Setup.*

'Practice' imposes no time limit on moves, allows you to look up words to check their validity from within the built-in Scrabble dictionary, allows you to 'undo' your last move, and gives access to Scrabble's superb hint system. The hint mechanism is once again configurable, and will give multiple hints when called for. You can set it to give many different hint combinations: you may like it to show the number of letters of the best-scoring word first, then the score that word would achieve, then the starting square for the word, then the starting letter, then finally it will actually play the word for you—the ultimate cheat! Subsequent presses of the hint option will cycle between all valid words, placing them on the board in descending order of points score. Practice mode also shows all the tiles held by each other player.

I can't emphasise enough how powerful this option is for honing your Scrabble skills. You have all the assistance you need at the touch of a button, and you can dynamically change the way it works as you go along. The hint system can be set to give advice at any of the nine TSP levels, so you can avoid it using words that are way outside your vocabulary.

The second game mode, 'Friendly', is the most informal of the *real* game modes. It gives all of the 'cheat' options of the Practice mode, but doesn't display the other players' letter racks.

Things get harder with 'Competition' mode, which imposes a time limit (selectable from 5-25 minutes per move), the hints, lookup and undo are all disabled, and your turn is forfeited if you play an invalid word. The 'Infinite' mode is identical, except that no time limits are imposed.



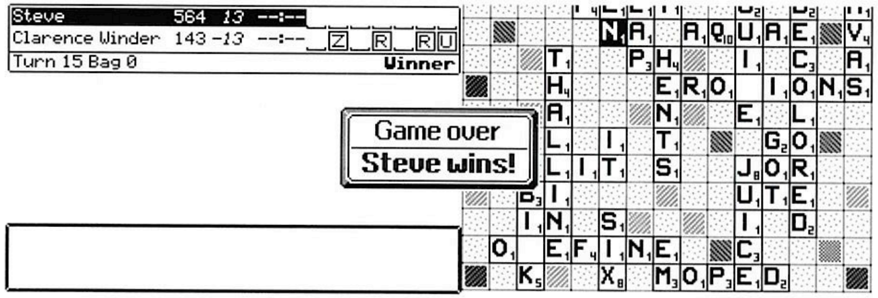
One of the many alternative views

The 'Rainbow' mode is a nice addition, being the equivalent of *Spears Junior Scrabble*, using its own board and rules.

The 'Setup' game can be used for game analysis and detailed evaluation, and allows you to place tiles and change letter arrangements at will—purely one for serious players.

Once you have decided the various startup options, you select 'New game' from the menu, and your initial seven tiles are displayed in your 'rack' on the bottom left side of the screen. The top left of the display is occupied with a status window showing (depending upon the mode you have set) each player's name, current score, last score, elapsed time, tiles, turn number, number of tiles remaining to play, and hint status where appropriate.

The remainder of the screen shows either one or two views of the board, which can be independently zoomed and panned as desired. Traversing the screen is very simple, and allows quick scrolling to the extremities of the board with special keystrokes. The bonus squares of the board are not marked directly, but you can either set the game to flash up their status whenever the cursor is over them, or you can always get information on a given square by pressing the asterisk key.


Steve 564 13 --:--
Clarence Winder 143 -13 --:--
Turn 15 Bag 0 Winner
Game over
Steve wins!

I win with a score of 564!—'cheating' with the superb hint system

There is little point in outlining the entire mechanism for playing the game here—suffice to say that 'Scrabbling' for long periods on the Psion feels in no way frustrating or limiting, and every feature of the board game is present—and then some. The computer never takes more than a few tens of seconds to move, and of course *never* appears to make mistakes.

Many other features are available, including the ability to automatically sort your tile rack into alphabetical order, show varying information as tiles are placed, and even show a view of all unplayed tiles. The final icing on this beautifully crafted work is the ability to save games, export entire game details to a summary text file from which you can recreate the whole thing, and the export of all the play statistics of up to six human players to a CSV spreadsheet/database file.

On the negative side the otherwise excellent online help does not explain the rules of the game of Scrabble (though this is almost entirely superfluous, and may even be a copyright issue).

In summary I have never seen a piece of software for the Psion with such a comprehensive and well executed feature list, coupled with such good downright usability. This isn't just a Scrabble game, it's a complete Scrabble player's toolkit. Considering the fact that the review version is not even the finished product (it's pre-release version 0.37), then I can do nothing but give this product my 100% endorsement. If you like word games then buy it, buy it, buy it!

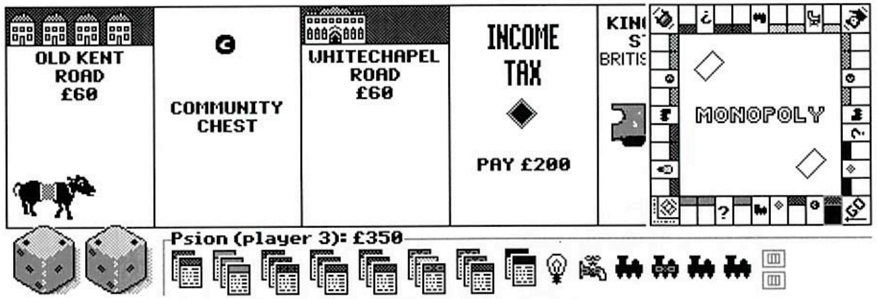
Steve Clack

InfoBOX

Scrabble will be available from all major Psion dealers, and release is planned for November. Price will be £49.95 (inc. VAT) on SSD.

Monopoly

As a more visually appealing board game than Scrabble, Monopoly also suffers more from the conversion to a 480x160 pixel black/grey screen. Although the screens are all cleverly conceived and well laid out it is still difficult to keep track of everything that's going on around the board in the way you can with the 'proper' version. Within the obvious screen limitations (and the lack of colour) the game is commendably well executed though, and I could find no serious faults or annoyances.



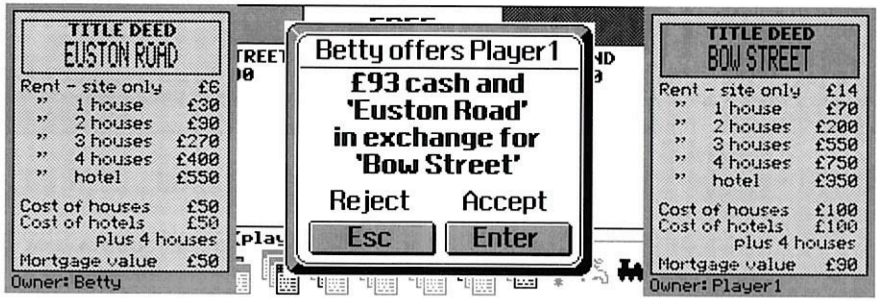
Psion (player 3): £350

Playing Monopoly—the main game screen with houses and hotels in place

The game can be configured with up to six players, any number of which can be real 'human' contestants. This way you can while away the hours on a long car journey, passing the Psion around between players whenever it comes to their turn. If you elect to play against one or more 'computer' opponents then their turns will be played automatically, prompting you for input wherever necessary. The game thus rolls along happily until you are required to make a decision or roll the dice (by pressing the spacebar). Whenever you have the opportunity to buy a property or are asked to 'make a deal' by another player the necessary information is presented on screen, and at any point you can use the diamond key to switch between the three main views:

The 'Board' view is the 'main' game screen, and is always in view as players are taking their turns. On the right hand side it shows a representative image of the entire board with a flashing cursor to show the position of the current player. The bulk of the screen to the left is used to show an enlarged view of four or five squares starting with the one currently in play. A narrow strip across the bottom of the screen is used to show the current dice throw and to highlight the cards in each group held by the current player.

This little 'status' screen is only intended as a quick overview, and the 'Wealth' and 'Sites' views are used whenever you need full details of who owns what. The image of the whole board on the right of the screen can be hidden if you prefer, though I found it more useful to keep it in view at all times.



TITLE DEED
EUSTON ROAD
Rent - site only £6
" 1 house £30
" 2 houses £90
" 3 houses £270
" 4 houses £400
" hotel £550
Cost of houses £50
Cost of hotels £50
plus 4 houses
Mortgage value £50
Owner: Betty

Betty offers Player1
£93 cash and
'Euston Road'
in exchange for
'Bow Street'

TITLE DEED
BOW STREET
Rent - site only £14
" 1 house £70
" 2 houses £200
" 3 houses £550
" 4 houses £750
" hotel £950
Cost of houses £100
Cost of hotels £100
plus 4 houses
Mortgage value £90
Owner: Player1

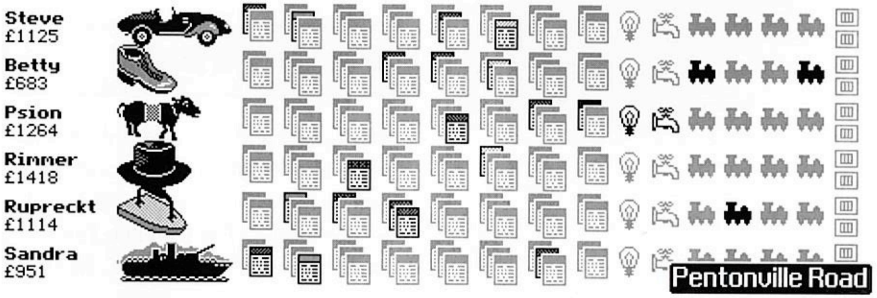
Making a deal...

The 'Wealth' view shows the current worth of each player, and allows you to identify which properties are owned by each player by scrolling around with the arrow keys. Properties owned by a given player are marked in black (rather than grey), and whenever you move the cursor over a property its name flashes up on screen.

The 'Site' view gives more detail still, showing every property arranged into their respective groups and allowing you to browse through and read the entire details of each Title Deed card by moving the cursor onto the relevant name. Sites owned by the current player are again highlighted in black.

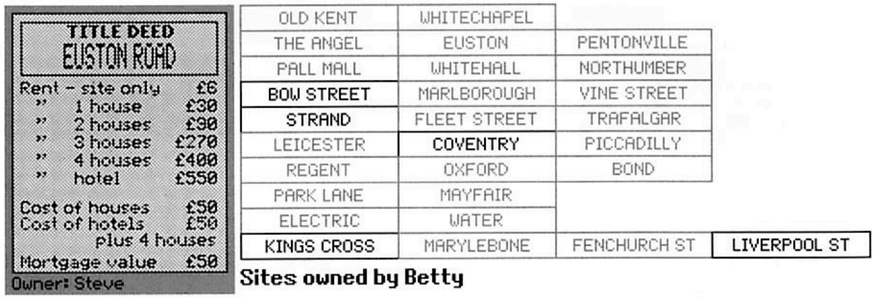
Other aspects of game play are handled automatically by the computerised 'banker', and such factors as 'Chance' cards, 'Community Chest' cards and the like are all kept track of for you.

Several options can be set to control the general appearance of the game, the use and volume of the sound effects, whether you want to time a game or limit its duration, and you can even set



Steve
£1125
Betty
£683
Psion
£1264
Rimmer
£1418
Rupreckt
£1114
Sandra
£951

Who's got what—the 'Wealth' view



TITLE DEED
EUSTON ROAD
Rent - site only £6
" 1 house £30
" 2 houses £90
" 3 houses £270
" 4 houses £400
" hotel £550
Cost of houses £50
Cost of hotels £50
plus 4 houses
Mortgage value £50
Owner: Steve

OLD KENT	WHITECHAPEL		
THE ANGEL	EUSTON	PENTONVILLE	
PALL MALL	WHITEHALL	NORTHUMBER	
BOW STREET	MARLBOROUGH	VINE STREET	
STRAND	FLEET STREET	TRAFALGAR	
LEICESTER	COVENTRY	PICCADILLY	
REGENT	OXFORD	BOND	
PARK LANE	MAYFAIR		
ELECTRIC	WATER		
KINGS CROSS	MARYLEBONE	FENCHURCH ST	LIVERPOOL ST

Sites owned by Betty

'Sites' view—what you've got, and what it's worth

a number of basic rule options such as whether trading is allowed when you are in jail, whether unlimited buildings are allowed and so on.

The animation and sound effects of the game are good, showing the dice spinning around whenever they are being 'thrown' and making suitable noises to enhance the game play throughout. I particularly liked the police siren that wails whenever a player lands on the 'Go to jail' square!

Auctioning of properties is nicely done in Monopoly, and whenever a high bid is made you hear the banging of the auctioneer's hammer as the screen displays the words 'going—going—gone' in synchronisation with the hammer blows. You can interrupt the bidding at any time to place your own bid, and a dialog appears to prompt you for the price you wish to offer.

Online help is very comprehensive, and gives all the information you need to play the game, even if you don't know the rules of Monopoly to begin with.

As you would expect, games can be saved and exited at any time, and you can simply resume play whenever convenient—no more having to abandon your game to free up the dining table for supper!

I wasn't a great Monopoly fan before I tried the Psion version, and I can't say that I'm a great fan now either. This is no reflection on the Psion version though, which works admirably well considering the limited screen size. If you are a Monopoly lover then you will certainly enjoy this version and should get many hours of fun playing it.

Steve Clack

InfoBOX

Monopoly will be available from all major Psion dealers, and just like Scrabble, release is planned for November. Price will be £39.95 on SSD and £29.95 on PC floppy disk.

Forthcoming meetings

Bath, England

An informal meeting for anyone wanting to chat about Psion matters in a friendly pub atmosphere:

Date: Tuesday 26th November
Time: around 7:30pm onwards
Place: The Boater public house
9 Argyle Street, Bath BA2 4BQ
(Argyle Street is the one straight after The Pultney Bridge.)

Contact *Palmtop* for more details, or see notices posted recently on the *PALMTOPA* conference on CompuServe.

Reading, England

Another informal users' meeting has been arranged by Rick Andrews. The venue is as follows:

Date: Monday 9th December
Time: around 7pm onwards
Place: The Sun Inn, Reading.

If you would like more details then please either e-mail Rick (rick@cix.compulink.co.uk) or contact *Palmtop* directly.

Palmtop SPECIAL OFFERS

We have negotiated the following SPECIAL OFFERS *exclusively* for *Palmtop* readers:

EXPORTECH are offering *£5 OFF* all 4Mb and 8Mb flash disks purchased before 31st December 1996. Just mention *Palmtop* when placing your order. See the advertisement on page 107 for full contact details.

CLOVE TECHNOLOGY are offering their Series 3/3a/3c *Executive Leather Case* (as reviewed in issue 5 of *Palmtop*) for *ONLY* £13.00 instead of £22.40 from now until Christmas. Please quote reference number 'PSO1' when ordering. See the advertisement on page 105 for full contact details.

Nicholson London Pages

Since 1967, visitors to London have found their way around the UK's capital with the aid of *Nicholson's London Guide*. This renowned publication has now been converted into an electronic format by Mobile Software, and is available for the Series 3a/3c.

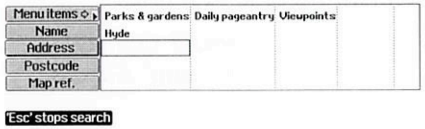
The disk contains up-to-date and comprehensive data on 3,100 venues and services throughout London. You'll find information on topics such as restaurants, pubs, accommodation, theatre, sightseeing, shopping, consumer services and sport.

The software is supplied on a 3½" PC floppy disk, and is a little on the large side. A full install to your Psion will take about 540K of RAM, so for this reason, 'London Pages' has been split into four separate databases:

- ► Accommodation and entertainment
- ► Shopping and consumer services
- ► Information, sport and health
- ► Sightseeing, leisure and children's London

Each of the databases are around 100K, and the program itself is over 100K, so make sure you've got at least 250K even if you only want to use one of the databases.

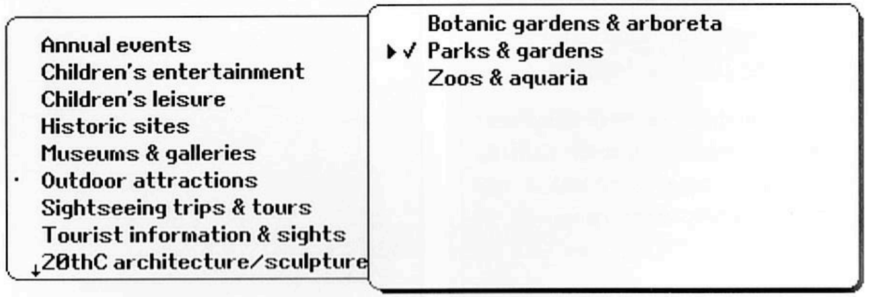
Installation is fairly straightforward: you decide which data you want to install, and then manually copy the files and databases you require into specific directories. Once installed, it's a case of starting the program, selecting one of the four databases and pressing <Enter>. You're then presented with the search page...


Menu items ◇
Name
Address
Postcode
Map ref.
Parks & gardens
Daily pageantry
Vieupoints

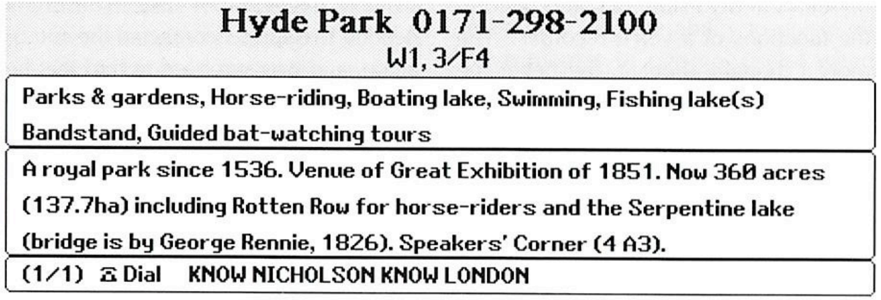
Name: Hyde

'Esc' stops search

Here you can enter a search clue as specific as you like. Entering a menu item pops up another screen giving you the option to scroll down a category list to find the type of entry that you're looking for...


Annual events
Children's entertainment
Children's leisure
Historic sites
Museums & galleries
Outdoor attractions
Sightseeing trips & tours
Tourist information & sights
20thC architecture/sculpture
Botanic gardens & arboreta
✓ Parks & gardens
Zoos & aquaria

Once you've selected your search clue, then a list of possible matches is shown. Selecting an item pops up more comprehensive information...



Hyde Park 0171-298-2100
W1, 3/F4

Parks & gardens, Horse-riding, Boating lake, Swimming, Fishing lake(s)
Bandstand, Guided bat-watching tours

A royal park since 1536. Venue of Great Exhibition of 1851. Now 360 acres (137.7ha) including Rotten Row for horse-riders and the Serpentine lake (bridge is by George Rennie, 1826). Speakers' Corner (4 A3).

(1/1) ☎ Dial KNOW NICHOLSON KNOW LONDON

The process of searching seemed awkward at first as there are a lot of steps to go through, but that's only if you go the long way around. If you know exactly what you want, it's much easier. The searching is very powerful, although the large number of options and filters might seem a little daunting. Once you've found the information, there really is everything you need to know, and it was very difficult to find anything either missing or out-of-date within 'London Pages'. A nice touch is the ability to use the Psion dialler to dial the contact number for you.

London Pages is supplied with a rather nice pocket guide, which is a 36 page booklet a little longer and wider than a Psion. As well as instructions on using the software there's a tube map, a fourteen page colour street map of London and a street index. The co-ordinates on the map correspond to the Nicholson information, so you can find your destination quickly. You can also enter a map reference into the search screen to find out what's near you.

All in all, this is a rather nice package, ideal for either business travellers or visitors to London. It's not a small program, but when you consider the depth and quality of the information available, it's not difficult to see why.

Pete Sipple

InfoBOX

London Pages is available from Widget Software at £19.95 inc. VAT.

Phone: +44 (0)1438 815444

Fax: +44 (0)1438 815222

Memovoc-3

A few weeks ago I had a brainwave. 'Wouldn't it be nice...', I thought to myself, '...if my Psion 3a could perform the functions of a voice recorder?' The more I thought about it, the better the idea sounded. The hardware capability was already there, and it would be extremely useful for those times when typing into the machine was simply impractical.

While reading issue 8 of my favourite magazine, I came across Steve Clack's comment that 'digital audio' was a waste of time, space and resources. He's quite right—more of a 'cool' feature than a useful one—the sort of thing most of us like to show off to non-Psion users but do not actually use ourselves. Like many Psion users I have a collection of WVE sound files that I use for various alarms, but I hardly ever use the RECORD application—it is probably the most primitive of the programs built into the 3a.

Elsewhere in that same magazine, I saw an advertisement for *Memovoc 2*. Someone had beaten me to it by nearly a year. I contacted the author—a Dubliner by the name of David Joyce—and downloaded a shareware copy from CompuServe. It was a neat piece of software which had some potential, but there were also a few problems. The central feature (to me) was that of Voice-Activated Recording (VAR), but it was flawed, as the recorder had a tendency to switch itself on when it was not called for—clearly the sensitivity needed tweaking. I contacted the author again, and was surprised to find that he had written an upgraded version of the software which would be released as a commercial product, and he kindly sent me a copy to review for *Palmtop*.

Like its predecessor, *Memovoc 3* allows the user to record and play back 'Voice Memos', and optionally assign alarms to them (annoyingly, you cannot get it to play back the voice memo as an alarm, you just get the Psion-standard 'ringing' tone instead). The length of the sound bites (bytes?!) is user definable, but three to five seconds is usually sufficient for most reminder-type messages. The number of these sound bites is effectively limited by the amount of free memory you have (the shareware version of *Memovoc 2* was limited to four memos, the registered version and version 3 are limited to 99). However, all of this can already be done with the built-in RECORD (or SOUNDMASTER) application, and since all require the use of the keyboard you may as well type the memo straight into AGENDA!

The interface is simple and virtually identical to the previous version apart from a nicer icon. There are two new major functions though:

- The first is a sensitivity setting for VAR, which helps to avoid 'false alarms'. At the highest sensitivity (1) VAR starts at the beating of a gnat's wing in the next dimension (i.e. don't breathe too loudly), but at the lowest-sensitivity setting of 8, it is said to be usable in a noisy environment.
- The second new function is the ability to set up WVE files to be played at the start and end of a VAR message. This means that you can set up a memo in the following manner:

  You: *"Record"*

  Psion: *"Go ahead Captain"* <BEEP>

  [You record your memo]

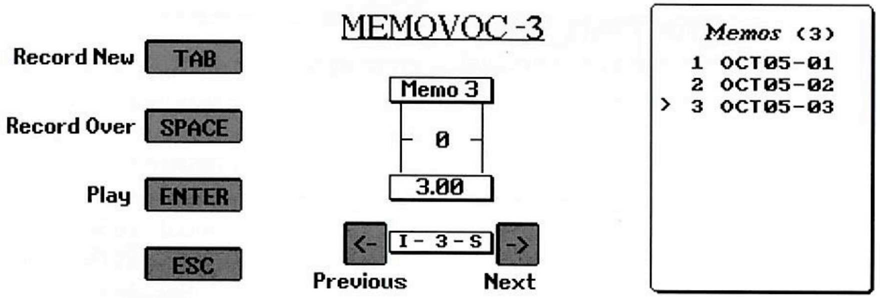
  Psion: <BEEP>*"Thank you Captain."*

You then have to deal with the inevitable questions from bystanders about what it is, how and why you are talking to it, how it talks back, etc. This is perhaps a slightly more frivolous feature, but the way I see it, if you are going to talk to a handheld computer it looks slightly less silly if the computer talks back...

There are also a couple of other new 'featurettes' like the ability to delete all voice memos in one go, useful when you need to reclaim some memory.

I tested the VAR feature by setting the sensitivity to 8, switching on VAR and driving to work, a journey that currently takes me 80 miles and 80 minutes. Using the Psion in this way is, to coin a phrase, 'way cool', and seriously useful too. During the drive, VAR took nine three-second memos and sixteen 'false alarms'. This is not quite as bad as it sounds, as finding and deleting the false alarms took only a few minutes when I arrived at work.

One thing that must be said about VAR is that in order for the Psion to 'listen' for the sound of your voice, it must of course be switched on continuously. For that reason, while VAR is engaged, auto-switch-off is disabled and the machine is, in effect, 'left on'. This will have a



This is it—the Memovoc screen

major impact on battery use, and for those who insist on using throwaway alkaline or lithium batteries, it could become expensive. Since I have been using rechargeables for years it is not an issue for me, I just have to replace them more often and take care to keep a fresh pair on hand. It is also annoying if you leave the Psion unattended for a few hours and return to find that the batteries have gone flat. If you are in the habit of leaving your Psion alone for hours at a time, however, you should be asking yourself why!

Memovoc 3 is resource-hungry. The program itself only takes up about 30K of space (and will live happily on a flash SSD), and grabs another 35K of your RAM when running. If you are going to use the VAR capability seriously though, you will need at least 200K of free RAM memory, and note that you cannot store voice memos on flash disks. With a storage requirement of 8Kb/sec for WVE data, an empty 2Mb machine will give you about 4 minutes of recording time. The 200K figure will give you about ten seconds of voice memo time, along with room for all those false alarms.

I have been using Psion's Series 3 machines for over four years now, and in spite of my apparent gripes about the product, I have to say that this is the most revolutionary application that I have installed on it since I plugged a spreadsheet SSD into my trusty 256K Series 3 all those years ago.

There is room for improvement, certainly. Sensitivity, or rather *insensitivity,* could be improved, but I think this may be a hardware limitation. Additionally, something needs to be done to prevent the program from draining the batteries. However, in spite of the quirks, *Memovoc 3* is a nice idea that is well implemented and, in the final analysis, both usable and useful.

If there is such as a thing as a 'killer app' for the 3a and 3c, then this is it.

Siena owners should note that due to the lack of a digital audio system, Memovoc will NOT run on the Siena.

Stephen Murgan

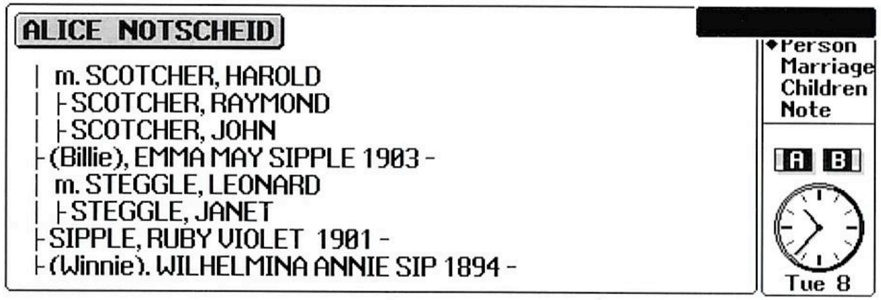
InfoBOX

The earlier Memovoc-2 is available as shareware as MEMOVOC2.ZIP at £10, from the usual sources. Memovoc-3 is available as a commercial product—see the advertisement on page 104 for more details.

STOP PRESS - At the time of going to press, the Author was testing out an experimental version of the program with extra-low sensitivity to minimise 'false alarms'. This functionality may not be in the initial commercial release—which should be available by the time you read this—but it is a strong possibility for future versions.

KGene

Family heritage is something which fascinates us all at some time in our lives. Looking back through faded family photos or reminiscing with older members of the family can turn curiosity into a passion. Genealogy, the study of a family's history, is becoming increasingly popular, and although tracing ancestry can be a time-consuming and frustrating venture, it is *so* rewarding when that missing piece of the puzzle is put in place and another link to a branch of the family tree is made.



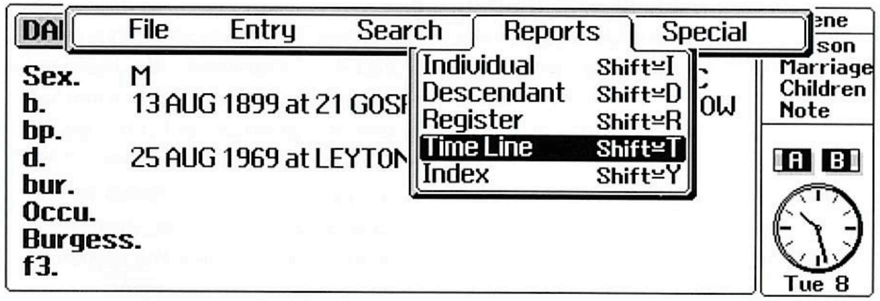
ALICE NOTSCHEID

```
| m. SCOTCHER, HAROLD
| ├SCOTCHER, RAYMOND
| ├SCOTCHER, JOHN
├(Billie), EMMA MAY SIPPLE 1903 -
| m. STEGGLE, LEONARD
| ├STEGGLE, JANET
├SIPPLE, RUBY VIOLET 1901 -
├(Winnie). WILHELMINA ANNIE SIP 1894 -
```

A Descendants Report

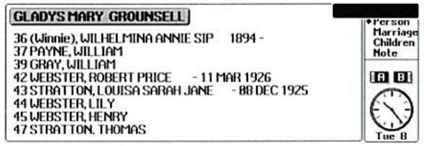
With large family trees, the only sensible way to process the data in an ordered and tabular form is to use a computer, and there are a host of programs for the larger computers to aid the data's compilation. KGene, written by UK author Kevin Groves, is the first such program that I've seen for the Psion, and is a superb example of the shareware concept at its best. Kevin has identified a need, written a program to meet that need, and then made it public—best of all, it's freeware.

kGene can either allow you to start your family tree from scratch, or import a



Sex. M
b. 13 AUG 1899 at 21 GOS
bp.
d. 25 AUG 1969 at LEYTON
bur.
Occu.
Burgess.
f3.

The reports menu



```
36 (Winnie), WILHELMINA ANNIE SIP    1894 -
37 PAYNE, WILLIAM
39 GRAY, WILLIAM
42 WEBSTER, ROBERT PRICE       - 11 MAR 1926
43 STRATTON, LOUISA SARAH JANE      - 08 DEC 1925
44 WEBSTER, LILY
45 WEBSTER, HENRY
47 STRATTON. THOMAS
```

No way out!

GEDCOM file, which is a standard file format used to exchange genealogy data from person to person and program to program. Importing my GEDCOM file of 170 entries took just under a minute, and worked perfectly.

The program's interface is very easy on the eye and navigation is straightforward, allowing you to jump off to a father, mother, spouse or child. As well as comprehensive help, there are some other useful features, including:

- Search using wildcards.
- Details of changes that you've made, saved in a log file.
- The ability to add notes and customise fields .
- Five powerful reports

It's difficult to find fault with this software: it's small, powerful, easy-to-use, and well thought out. One very minor niggle is that a failed 'Find' doesn't return a 'Can't find anyone' message. Also, displaying an index of the 170 people in my database shows eight people at a time with a keypress moving onto the next eight entries. It would be nice to have the <Esc> key available as an escape route!

I have to admit that this program has impressed me, and KGene gets 10 out of 10 as a superb program. Searching for family information at a Records Office or library is the kind of activity where a pocket computer is invaluable. One thing still puzzles me though—the large number of PC programs available demonstrates that Genealogists are prepared to pay for programs of this kind, which begs the question, "Why's it free Kevin?"

Pete Sipple

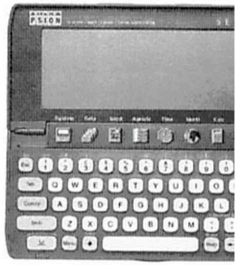
InfoBOX

KGENE106.ZIP (23K) is available from the usual shareware sources, and is free. CiX users note that the latest version is available from the ksoft conference.

FILER error

In issue 8 of *Palmtop* we reviewed FILER, a shareware file manager program. We incorrectly reported that the program will not support tagging of multiple files. This feature is in fact disabled in the unregistered version, but *does* work if you register the software. We apologise for this error.

Programmers' Workshop



by Leigh Edwards

Last time I discussed the four types of OPL variables, how they are stored in memory, how to pass back more than one value from a procedure call, plus the effects of variables on memory storage and speed of program execution. In this issue I'll finish the theme of variables by discussing conversion between variable types, dynamic allocation of memory for variables, an alternative method of returning multiple values from a procedure, and an equivalent to the `DATA` keyword found in the BASIC language.

Varying your variables

With the three numeric types—integer, long integer and floating-point—you can assign any type to any other, and the value on the right-hand side will be converted to the variable type on the left-hand side. However you must be aware of rounding down and possible errors due to numeric overflow or sign changes. For example:

```
LOCAL I% REM integer
LOCAL L& REM long integer
LOCAL F  REM floating-point
F = 5.99
I% = F  REM I% will be converted to 5
```

```
F = -5.99
I% = F      REM I% will be converted to -5 not 6
L& = 70000 REM This value is OK for a long integer,
I% = L&     REM but this will cause an overflow error
F = L&      REM No problem here floats can hold
             REM bigger values than long integers
```

Obviously conversions by direct assignment will not cause problems for the following: Integer to long integer, integer to floating-point, long integer to floating-point. Although direct assignment works, there is a specific function to convert an integer or long integer to floating point, i.e. `f=FLT(x&)`.

For floating-point to integer or long integer, use the `INT()` function. To trim the fractional part (digits after the decimal point) from a floating-point number and obtain a floating point result, use the `INTF()` function. If you convert by directly assigning a floating-point value to an integer or long integer, the fractional part will automatically be discarded, assuming that the converted value is not too large.

For integer to string (ASCII character) conversion use `a$=CHR$(x%)`, which is suitable for integers of 255 or less. This function will not work for long integers—they have to be assigned to a integer variable first. To get the complete string representation of an integer, long integer or floating-point value, for formatted output purposes for instance, use `FIX$()` or `GEN$()`.

The `NUM$()` function will return just the integer part of a floating-point number (i.e. the digits before the decimal point) rounded up to the nearest whole number, although pointless, using the `NUM$()` function with integers or long integers will not cause errors. The `SCI$()` function is used to convert any number to a string in scientific format.

For string to integer use `ASC()` for a single character string, or the first character of a string e.g. if `a$="Palmtop"` then `a%=ASC(a$)` would set `a%` equal to 80. To find the ASCII code for any printable character use the `%` operator. e.g. `a%=%x` will set `a%` to equal 120, the ASCII code for 'x'.

When converting a string to integer, long integer or floating-point, for a string which contains a valid mathematical expression, the `r=EVAL(a$)` function will return the numeric result of the expression in `a$` in `r%`, `r&` or `r`. The string can contain any maths function or operator. If the string just contains valid numeric characters e.g. "3.142" use the `r=VAL(a$)` function. If the string contains a floating-point number, but the variable to receive the value is an integer e.g. `r%=VAL("223.03")`, only the digits before the decimal point will be converted (assuming the number is within range).

To convert integers into hexadecimal format use the `HEX$()` function. To specify hex constants put a `$` symbol in front of the value e.g. `a%=$FF` would make `a%` = 255 decimal. Use the `&` symbol for long integer constants. A crafty way of converting hexadecimal strings back to decimal is to put a `$` symbol at the start of the string and use the `EVAL()` function.

For example if `a$` = "1FF", then:

```
a$="$"+a$
r%=EVAL("a$")
```

would result in `r%` = 511 decimal. Again be careful about errors due to overflow and the sign of resultant values. Use a `&` symbol to convert long integer values.

To manipulate parts of strings, the `LEFT$()`, `RIGHT$()` and `MID$()` functions are available, but an easy way to trim a string to the desired length is as follows:

```
LOCAL f$(130)
....
f$=PARSE$(.....)  REM parse$ gets full path and file name
POKEB ADDR(f$),7  REM poke length byte to 7 for node & drive
                   REM info only e.g. f$ = "LOC::M:"
```

Sometimes when calling EPOC operating system functions which have string parameters, you must pass them as so-called 'zero terminated'. This is easily achieved, e.g. `a$ = a$ + CHR$(0)`. I'll leave it as an exercise for the reader to work out how to get just the fractional part of a floating-point number (I can see at least two ways to do this).

Variable amounts of variables

Occasionally you may not know how much space your program will need to store a set of values. For example, a database sorting routine where you do not know how many records might be involved in the sort. One solution would be to set a limit on the program and declare an array size at the maximum number of records that can be sorted. This is not ideal for many reasons: e.g. it will use more memory than is necessary on average, the program may fail at the outset due to lack of available memory even though the user may not wish to sort records, and the amount of memory will vary depending on the type of data to be sorted. The best way to avoid these problems is to dynamically allocate memory when the sort function is invoked by the user. The `ALLOC()` keyword can be used to reserve an amount of memory of sufficient size (in bytes) to sort the number of records selected. If insufficient memory is available to meet the `ALLOC()` request then the value returned by the call is set to zero. Otherwise the address of the block of memory is returned and data can be stored using the appropriate `POKEx` commands and retrieved using the corresponding `PEEKx` functions. When the work is done all of the memory can be released using the `FREEALLOC()` command.

A little hidden magic

When any program (process) is started, an area of memory called the process data segment is allocated to it by the operating system. A block of that memory is reserved for the so-called reserved or 'magic' statics, most are used to manage the process, but a block of fourteen bytes can safely be used by the program itself. They are like special global variables and are available from anywhere in the code—hence 'magic', and retain their values—hence 'static', for the lifetime of the program. They are always found at the same addresses i.e. 0x28-0x35 (40-53 decimal), (the statics, treated as seven integer length values, are usually referred to by the names `DatApp1-DatApp7`).

So this gives two alternative approaches to passing back multiple values from a procedure. Returned values could be stored and retrieved using the magic static locations, i.e. using the `POKEx` commands and the appropriate `PEEKx` functions. There is enough memory for fourteen byte values, seven integers, three long integers, but only one floating-point value (eight bytes each).

Alternatively, the statics can be used indirectly, i.e. to hold the addresses of the variables to be modified by the procedure, which can then be used in the `POKEx` or `PEEKx` statements. Since the address of a variable in memory is always an integer value this allows the addresses of up to seven variables of any type to be held. The first method is fairly straightforward, but the indirect method is a little more obscure so I think an example is required:

```
PROC price:
  LOCAL tradep,taxrate,markup
  LOCAL custp,profit,taxamnt
  POKEW 40,ADDR(taxamnt) REM put address of variables in the
  POKEW 42,ADDR(profit)  REM magic static memory locations
  taxrate =.175 REM tax rate may vary depending on product
  markup = 0.2  REM profit margin may vary
  PRINT “Trade price ?”, REM ask the sales person
  INPUT tradep           REM for the trade price
  REM call salesp: to return the customers
  REM price, the memory addresses of the taxamnt
  REM and profit variables are in the magic statics
  REM so salesp: can directly modify them using POKEF
  custp=salesp:(tradep,markup,taxrate)
  PRINT “Customer price”,custp REM show the results
  PRINT “Sales tax”,taxamnt
  PRINT “Profit”,profit
  GET
  RETURN 0
ENDP

PROC salesp:(tp,mu,txr)
  REM the magic statics at address 40 & 42 hold
  REM the addresses of tax and profit
  REM of the other 2 floating point variables to be modified
  REM use PEEKW to get the address held in each magic static
  POKEF PEEKW(40),(tp*(1+mu))*txr REM poke in the value of
  POKEF PEEKW(42),tp*mu           REM sales tax & profit
  RETURN (tp*(1+mu))*(1+txr) REM return the customer price
ENDP
```

If you wish to use variable types other than floating point you will obviously have to substitute the `POKEF` commands used above for the variant appropriate to your variable types (see Chapter 13 of the programming manual).

Lets get BASIC

Now, suppose you wish to store some constant data in your program code as per the **DATA** statement in the BASIC language. There is no equivalent to **DATA** in OPL, so you may be forced to use a data file. Although file handling is relatively easy, it is not always the simplest or most appropriate method. If each byte in the data is equivalent to a displayable character then you could use a literal string, if not the next best alternative is to use an array. The type of array used and how you fill it will depend upon the type of data, and how you intend to use it or read it out. If you need individual bytes of data which will be read using **PEEKB** you could use an integer array, for example:

```
LOCAL data%(10)
data%(1) = $EB3A
data%(2) = $55E8
etc. to fill the array.
```

However the 8086 class processor used in the Series 3 stores integers in reversed order in memory, so the above example would result in the bytes stored in the following order of increasing memory location 3A, EB, E8, 55. If you intend to read the data as integers using **PEEKW** then each integer will be returned directly as entered. Similarly if you use a long integer array, which is more efficient to fill, then to get the data in the byte order: EB, 3A, 55, E8, 95, 00, 83, EC, you would have to initialise it using:

```
LOCAL data&(10)
data&(1) = &E8553AEB
data&(2) = &EC830095
etc.
```

i.e. below the left four columns give individual bytes; the right-hand column is the bytes reorganised as long words:

```
EB  3A  55  E8   E8553AEB
95  00  83  EC   EC830095
```

If you intend to read the data as long integers using **PEEKL** then each long integer will be returned directly as entered.

Well done to those who persevered and are still hanging in there, things will get a little lighter next time when I'll be taking the lid off OVAL—see page 73 for a brief taster.

The author can be contacted via e-mail using *ple@cix.compulink.co.uk* or *100533.1726@compuserve.com* or via *Palmtop.*

Living with the 3c

After a month or so with a shiny new Series 3c, Pete Sipple talks about what's good, what's not so good, and what's awful...

The Series 3c was launched on 5th September, and I was fortunate enough to get hold of a 1Mb machine on that day, about two weeks before they made it to the shelves in most areas. Having had over a month's use out of the 3c, I've come to the conclusion that although it's not the machine we were perhaps hoping for, it's an excellent little computer with some rather nice new features, as well as a few shortcomings...

The look and feel

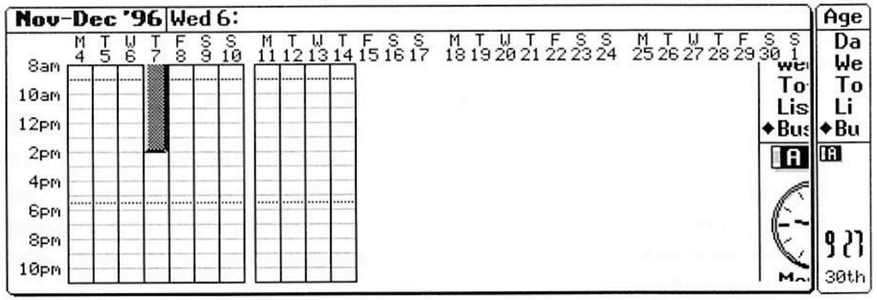
My 3c unwittingly became the star attraction when I brought it along to a Psion users get-together in London last month. Most of the people who handled the new machine echoed my view that the feel of the case is something that's going to take time to get used to. Although it's a little less slippery than the 3a, I'm not sure that Psion have made the right choice with this new material. It's fairly prone to being scratched in daily use, highlights greasy fingerprints and is difficult to clean. In a bright light, my month-old 3c looks more worn than my year-old 3a. I've also found that the 3c's rubbery newness still lingers on my hands after use.

The Series 3c manual

Psion have done a good job of the manual, which is almost worthy of a review in its own right. It's a solid book, nearly twice as thick as its 3a counterpart, weighing in at 374 pages plus index. The layout and writing style is friendly, it's a little less cramped than the 3a manual, has an excellent index, and a glossary. Some nice touches such as clearer headings and the use of 'tip' and 'warning' icons make this a much more user-friendly manual than the old 3a offering. The programming manual is still a chargeable extra, available directly from Psion.

Infrared

Probably the most significant technological change to the 3c comes in the form of its *IrDA* compatibility. Not having access to an infrared printer means that I've only been able to able to get my Series 3c to talk to a Siena, which it does perfectly. The data transfer rate is quick, and even using the 'low power' setting, the machine doesn't get upset by moving the two computers around, or temporarily obstructing the line-of-beam. It's a shame that the IR only lets you send or receive one file at a time—the ability to tag and send multiple files would have been extremely useful. Before you ask, it's unlikely that you'll be able to get an add-on to switch TV channels from your Psion—the two devices operate at different frequencies.



Busy view—having problems

A summary of the new applications software can be found in the review in issue 8 of *Palmtop*, but there are a few features worthy of mention:

Agenda

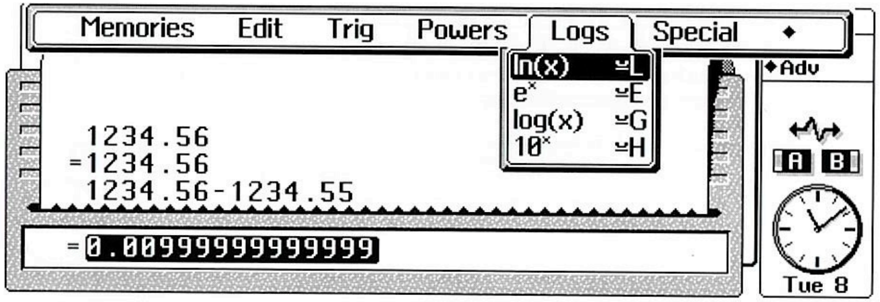
Still an excellent application, especially as it's more compatible with Lotus Organiser and Microsoft Schedule+. AGN files can be exchanged from the 3a to 3c and vice versa, although some of the year symbols and entry codes won't work on the 3a. The new 'Busy' view is pretty useful, although you get the feeling that this feature was shoe-horned in a little, as the screen staggers to re-draw from left to right, taking a couple of seconds. It's certainly not smooth.

Data

This is now quite powerful and has been enhanced by the new 'List' view. A word of warning to anyone with a large datafile: the alphabetical 'sort' feature can seriously damage your speed. The sort itself is not too bad—I sorted my largest database (2075 records totalling 64Kb) in just over two minutes, the problem comes when searching. The file itself is not re-sorted record-by-record, only indexed. Un-indexed, I could search for the last record in the database in about 4 seconds. After a 'sort', it took 11 seconds for the same search. The trick seems to be to sort your database, save the 'sorted' file to a new filename, then delete the original and rename the new file to the old name.

Calculator

Apart from the facelift, there aren't many changes here. There's now the option to 'bring' a number in from another application, as well as the option to 'beam' the answer off to another machine using the infrared facility. Interestingly, there's a mathematical error in the 'advanced' view, that doesn't happen in the desk view—see the screenshot below.



```
 1234.56
=1234.56
 1234.56-1234.55
=0.00999999999999
```

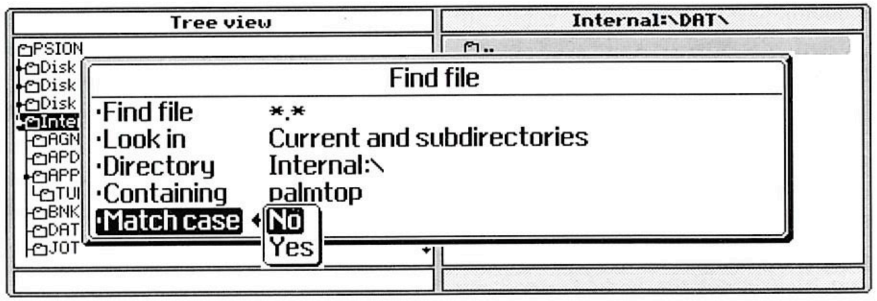
Errr... shouldn't that be 0.01 ?

Files

The more I use this application, the more I realise just how useful and powerful it is. Having never used a third-party file manager in the past I've been restricted to the basic file selector accessed with the system screen's <tab>. This is now a program I couldn't do without, and I've already assigned my SHEET softkey button so that Files is just a keypress away!

Probably the most useful feature is the ability to move, copy or delete multiple files and directories in one go, which makes tidying up a lot easier.

Two other welcome tools are 'compare directories', which tags unique files in



Find file

·Find file *.*
·Look in Current and subdirectories
·Directory Internal:\
·Containing palmtop
·Match case ◆ No
Yes

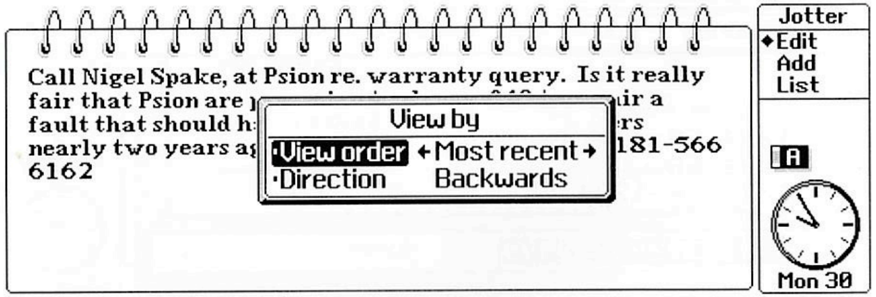
Powerful file finder

different directories, and the ability to apply a filter to a list of files, limiting the result to show only the ones you're looking for.

Another nice touch is the inclusion of file type icons. These give 'Files' a *Windows 95* feel, and although the icons are a little small it does make it easier to identify the various file types such as DBF, JOT and WRD.

The ability to associate a particular file type to a specified application is useful too, and allows you to simply open a given file type by pressing <Enter> with the cursor over the desired filename. This automatically launches the associated application program using the selected file, and can be set up to associate any three-letter file extension with an application file on your machine.

Three views are available: 'files', 'tree' and 'status', and the left hand side of the screen can be totally independent of the right hand side, allowing the user to <tab> between drives and directories. Files is also very customisable, with options to view date, time, size and attributes in the tree list. For the brave, there's also the option to disable the 'do you really want to do this' messages used when deleting files and directories. Full marks to Psion for adding (Yellow Computing's) Files to the 3c's ROM.



Call Nigel Spake, at Psion re. warranty query. Is it really
fair that Psion are ir a
fault that should h rs
nearly two years a 181-566
6162

View by

·View order ◆ Most recent ▸
·Direction Backwards

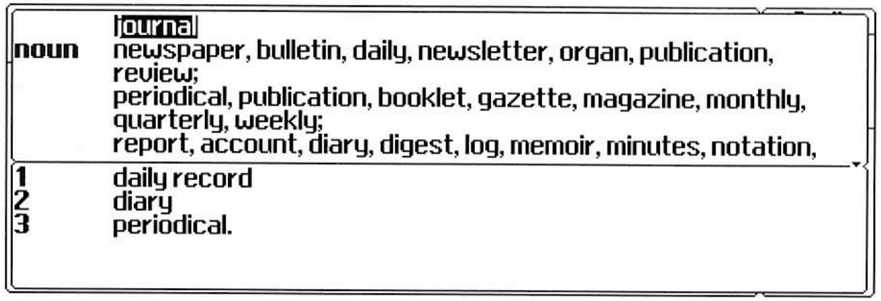
A convenient scratchpad

Jotter

I confess that when I first saw this application I was a little surprised. It's a relatively simple little program, and doesn't really offer anything that can't be done with either WORD or AGENDA's To-do option. Now that I've been using the machine for some weeks, I've become more used to Jotter, and I now find uses for it—either for taking very quick notes, or as a scratchpad to get text down quickly before pasting it to its final location. One thing surprises me about Jotter though: I had assumed that due to its basic nature Jotter could remain open at all times, being less memory 'hungry' than, say, WORD. Surprisingly though, Jotter takes 14K of RAM memory when running, compared to WORD's 10K.

Dictionary

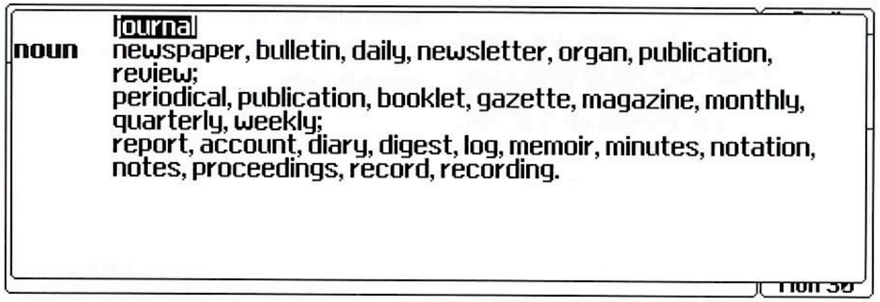
It's come to light that the 3c's built-in dictionary is slightly cut-down compared to the 3a and separate SSD versions. What's missing?—the definitions. Personally, I found these to be rather useful, and I'll miss them. Psion have kept quiet about this, and when pressed for a comment their reply is that "something had to be sacrificed to shoe-



journal
noun newspaper, bulletin, daily, newsletter, organ, publication, review;
periodical, publication, booklet, gazette, magazine, monthly, quarterly, weekly;
report, account, diary, digest, log, memoir, minutes, notation,

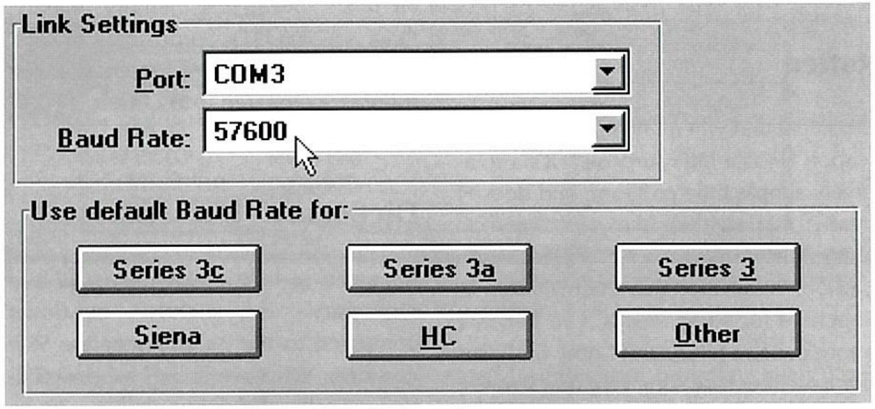
1 daily record
2 diary
3 periodical.

Series 3a - with definitions



journal
noun newspaper, bulletin, daily, newsletter, organ, publication, review;
periodical, publication, booklet, gazette, magazine, monthly, quarterly, weekly;
report, account, diary, digest, log, memoir, minutes, notation, notes, proceedings, record, recording.

Series 3c - No definitions



Port: COM3

Baud Rate: 57600

PsiWin v1.1 software compatible the full Psion range

horn the new toys into the 2Mb of onboard ROM." Oh—and the spellchecker doesn't find the word "Siena" either!

PsiWin

The new *PsiWin* package is more-or-less the same as the 3a version. The *Microsoft Windows* interface is virtually unchanged, and the package is still supplied with RCOM for DOS, although the early version contained an incorrect file, RCOM.RSC. Psion are now freely distributing the 'fix'. See the news section on page 4 for full details.

PsiWin's PC file conversion has two new formats added, Lotus Organiser 2.1 and Microsoft Schedule+ 7.0, which should prove useful for desktop PIM users.

There's an interesting error on page 71 of the PsiWin manual, where it's explained that the lead splits in half (it doesn't), and goes ahead to give the pinouts for the soap-on-a-rope (which doesn't apply to the 3c/Siena version).

The lead itself is nothing special, with a standard 9-way D plug on one end, and the slim 15-pin Honda plug on the other. Without the bulbous 'soap-on-a-rope' of the old Series 3/3a *3Link* there is now no software built into the lead, which makes the price of nearly £80 for a simple cable, three floppy disks and an eighty page manual a little steep, especially for 3a users who at the time of going to press have no alternative upgrade path.

A new cable for Apple Macintosh users will be available with the existing Mac 'Psion Link' software (which already supports 57,600bps) from 18th November, but there are no announcements for other computer users. We will keep readers posted on developments in

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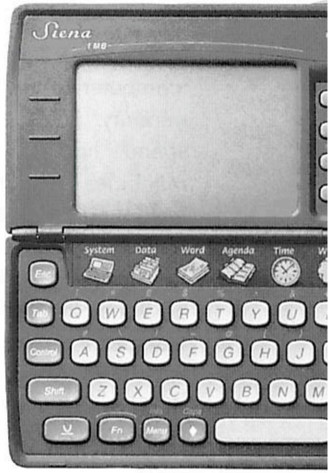
Portable Panache



After some extended use of a 1Mb Psion Siena, Steve Clack talks a little about where it's likely to stand in the palmtop arena...

This has to be the most powerful and stylish electronic organiser to appear since the term was first coined. As always, Psion's industrial design team have succeeded in producing an impressively packaged unit, and their software people have stuffed the innards with about eighty percent of the features of a 3a or 3c.

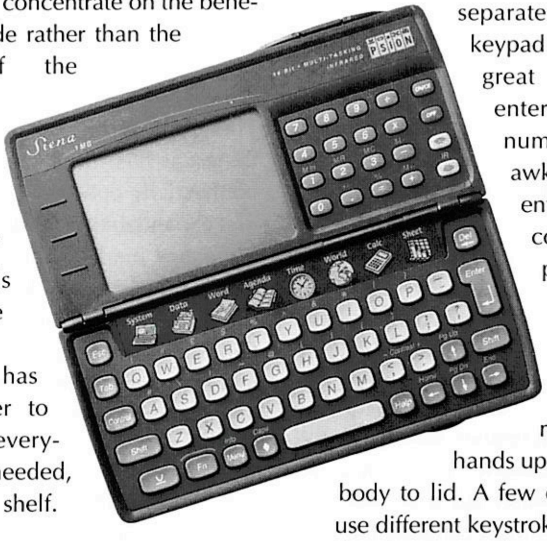
Despite the impressive power of the machine I have still referred to it as an 'electronic organiser' (a term which I dislike), as this is most certainly the way the general public will perceive it. I consider the Series 3a and 3c to be *computers* in the true sense of the word: they offer realistic processing power, a good display, flexibility, expandability (via the SSD slots) and connectivity (via the RS232 link).

The Siena is of course most of these things: it has the same processor and connectivity options—but the flexibility and expandability just don't match up to the bigger models. This is quite reasonable, and in no way lessens the appeal of the Sienas. The Siena is designed for the user who doesn't *need* the ability to add extra megabytes of storage, or a full arsenal of add-on software. It is a machine for the masses.

I don't use the term 'masses' in a demeaning sense: the world is full of people who have plenty of use for a genuinely powerful little computer that will slip easily into a pocket or handbag, but who aren't 'computer enthusiasts' and never will be. These people don't want to buy add-ons for their machine—they just want something that works—out of the box—without unnecessary 'fiddling'.

In a global sense those of us in the 'computer enthusiast' camp are in a tiny minority. Most people don't want to spend hours learning about their machines or adjusting them for maximum efficiency: they want a *tool* that keeps track of their personal information—pure and simple. As computers advance, the technology behind them will become less and less visible until such time that almost all of us will use them in that way. This will be the time that computers have really come of age, and we can all concentrate on the benefits they provide rather than the workings of the machines themselves.

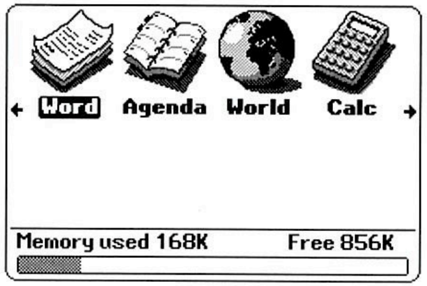
The Siena is a 'low maintenance' machine in this vein. For the 'average' user the Siena has enough power to do almost everything that's needed, straight off the shelf.



What's it got?

There's little point in describing the software in detail here. Everything is pretty much as per the 3a/3c, with the following notable exceptions:

- ► The screen is exactly half the width of the 3a/3c's (in both physical size and pixel resolution). Strangely enough I didn't find this to be a major limitation when using any of the built-in applications, though whenever I moved back to a 3a or 3c its screen suddenly seemed enormous by comparison.
- ► Because of the narrower screen, some of the menu options are buried within other menus.
- ► The keyboard is quite different, both in size, feel, and the location of many of the keys. The separate numeric keypad in the lid is great if you are entering a lot of numbers, but awkward if you are entering them in conjunction with predominantly textual material, requiring you to constantly move your hands up and down from body to lid. A few commands also use different keystrokes to the 3a/3c: for instance the *print preview* command is accessed with <Psion><?> rather than <Psion><*>. Changing from a 3a/3c to a Siena is initially frustrating, because the different assignment of keystrokes such as £, $, @, %, &, etc. slows down data entry considerably. This was largely unavoidable due to the 'missing' row of number keys above the QWERTYUIOP row of keys, but is an annoyance nevertheless.



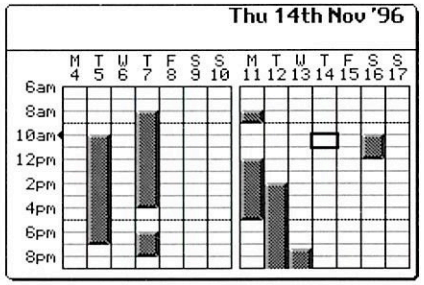
A familiar screen

- ► The Siena has no digital audio capability, so you can't record your own alarms or dial the telephone with it.
- ► The spell checker/thesaurus from the 1Mb/2Mb 3a and 3c is neither included nor available. This is a real pity because the improved portability of the Siena over the 3a/3c means that you are more likely to be carrying it with you during those odd moments when you want to look up a word (like now, while I'm sitting on a train writing this article).
- ► The JOTTER and FILES applications from the new 3c are not present in the Siena. The JOTTER would have been a prime contender for the Siena, where again its smaller size makes it particularly suitable for quickly scribbled messages and notes. I'll forgive the omission of the 3c's new FILES file manager on the grounds that the lack of built-in SSD drives reduces the requirement to move lots of files around.
- ► The Siena incorporates a slightly trimmed-down version of the AGENDA application. The 'busy' view of the 3c is retained, but is truncated to show 2 weeks at a view rather than 4. It has no year view, as this would be almost impossible to squeeze into the limited screen size. In day and week views the screen shows one 'page' at a time instead of two on the 3a/3c equivalents.

From a user's perspective

In the two weeks I spent using a Siena in place of my 3a/3c I missed the bigger machine far less than I would have anticipated, and I certainly noticed the reduced weight and size in my pocket. I was always more likely to carry the Siena with me because of its compactness, and I felt less self-conscious when opening it up in public places.

The keyboard took a little getting used to. The keys are smaller than the Series 3's and require a lot more pressure to make them register. Within a few days I was used to the heavier feel though, and found it reasonable to use, although not as accurate as the 3a/3c keyboard. The top half of the Siena is considerably heavier than the bottom, and this feels odd if using the machine while holding it in your hands. It feels much more



AGENDA ***Busy*** **view—2 weeks shown**

comfortable if you sit it firmly on a flat surface, and this improves typing accuracy too.

The Siena is particularly strong at traditional 'organiser' functions, so makes a perfect portable companion. For the user who requires a powerful and comprehensive diary and appointment manager the Siena is an excellent choice.

Market positioning

The question of whether the Siena will steal away market share from the likes of Casio and Sharp is of course important, may but it will also be interesting to see whether it will steal it from the 3a and 3c too. To the user who doesn't anticipate future use of major add-in programs the Siena will seem like a great way to save a hundred pounds or so while getting an overall package that is lighter and easier to carry around.

For those who *will* want additional software the worth of the Siena remains to be seen.

If we do see a good range of software becoming available then the biggest problem for many users will be how to get the programs into their machines. Remembering that the Siena has no internal SSD slots the choice is between either transferring everything from a full-sized computer via *PsiWin*, or purchasing the separate SSD drive, which at £80 is expensive. Backups offer the same dilemma.

Finally, a strange point to note about the Siena. Although the attractive spiral-bound 130 page *User Guide* supplied with the machine is well-written and an excellent beginners' guide, it is ONLY PART OF THE MANUAL! More advanced functions and a lot of reference material such as function listings are *not* in this book! If you want to learn how to use the full power of the Siena then you are forced to purchase a separate book entitled *'Psion Siena Handbook - make the most of your Siena'*, priced at £6.95. To add insult to injury this book will not become available until at least November or December!

This may have been done either to save Psion some money, or to avoid frightening off potential buyers by presenting an overly complicated-looking manual. In either case I think it is a big mistake to charge an extra £6.95 for something that is required simply to learn how to use all the features of the computer.

How about some reader feedback on this? - Ed.

Where the heck are we?

A guide to using Global Positioning Systems with the Psion 3a/3c

by Paul Roberts

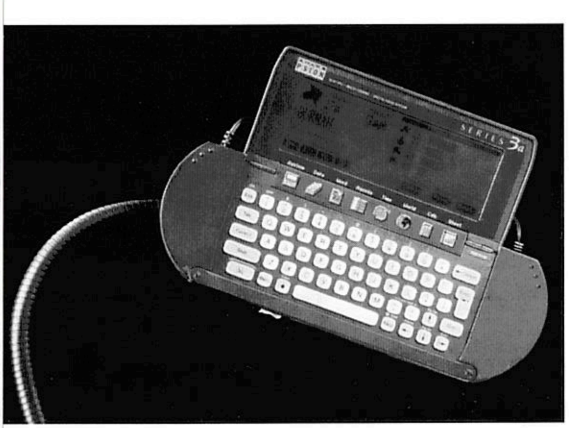
What is GPS?

Originally invented by the United States Army for their own use, the GPS (**G**lobal **P**ositioning **S**ystem) is currently one of the most powerful navigational tools available. Its purpose is to simply point out to the user exactly where on the Earth they are, quite literally, to within 100 metres or so. The system is inherently even more accurate than this, but it is intentionally handicapped by the U.S. government with the *selective availability program* in the satellites themselves. Without this, the system could reach an accuracy of around 15 metres. This amazing feat is achieved using a network of satellites orbiting the Earth. First being launched in the 1970s, the orbits work on a truly global scale, meaning that a sufficient number of satellites can be 'seen' from any spot on Earth. Each satellite constantly transmits by radio both its location and the time on its internal clock.

To make proper use of the satellites you need a GPS Receiver, which will receive and interpret the transmissions of the satellites, allowing it to give a reading. Though once expensive, GPS units have now dropped rapidly in price and are aimed at the general public, being sold in most outdoor shops next to your rucksacks and sleeping bags.

Why connect it to the Psion?

The GPS system itself simply tells you at what map co-ordinates you are located. To use that information to navigate, you



need to consult a good old fashioned map to make sense of these co-ordinates. This is a long-winded process as it involves reading the co-ordinates, opening up your map and reading across to your grid reference to find where you are. What you need is to automate the whole thing—and this is where the Psion steps in!

The Psion already has the ability to display geographical information, as demonstrated with the famous *Mapper-3a*, and Microsoft's *AutoRoute* programs. These are fine in themselves, but like the GPS unit they alone cannot be the full solution to navigation. When the two are combined, however, things get much more useful: the GPS will be able to tell the Psion exactly where you are located, allowing your mapping software to display a view of the area for you.

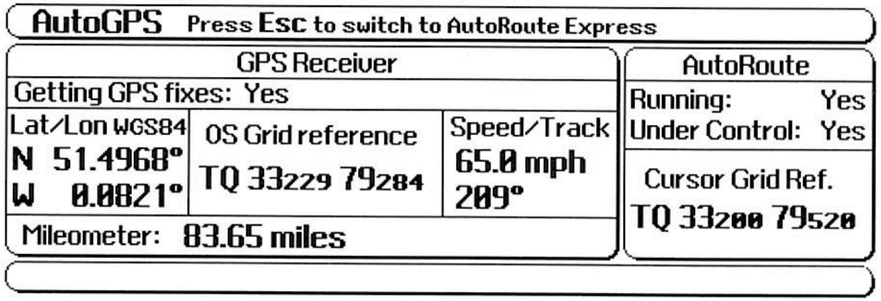
First you need a receiver...

As I mentioned before, GPS receivers are now standard equipment in many outdoor shops (or one based around a sport where it is easy to get lost!) Places specialising in amateur electronics (such as Maplin) usually have a good range too. You'll probably need to spend about £200-£300 for a unit. Two which really stand out as being popular and practical for the Psion user are the *Magellan* and *Garmin* models.

The most important thing to keep in mind when choosing a GPS receiver for the Psion is that it must have a serial (RS232) interface built in, otherwise it cannot be connected. A good example is the *Garmin GPS45*. Also, most, if not all of the brand-specific Psion GPS software is written for this receiver, and it is an ideal choice for use with the Psion. This model is available at just under £300.

So, How do I connect it?

An easy way to get your 3a/3c and the GPS unit to 'talk' to each other is to just attach the standard *3Link* (PsiWin) cable to your Psion. Most GPS's will also need an extra cable to go from the *3Link* to the receiver, and this can be purchased with the unit. The Psion and the GPS then communicate via a standard known as NMEA, the common protocol used for the transmission of GPS data.



AutoGPS Press Esc to switch to AutoRoute Express

GPS Receiver
Getting GPS fixes: Yes
Lat/Lon WGS84
N 51.4968°
W 0.0821°
OS Grid reference
TQ 33229 79284
Speed/Track
65.0 mph
209°
Mileometer: 83.65 miles

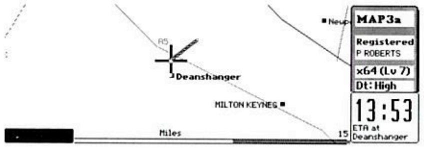
AutoRoute
Running: Yes
Under Control: Yes
Cursor Grid Ref.
TQ 33200 79520

AutoGPS

A neater way is to use a product called the 'Cradle' from *Positioning Ltd.* This is a compact support arm which houses everything you need for in-car GPS communication using a Psion, all in an easily car-mountable form. This includes an in-built *3Link* and a power supply which connects to the cigar lighter socket (it will even power the GPS receiver as well). This is a rather expensive solution, but is superbly practical, allowing the Psion to be slipped in and out of the cradle without messing with cables.

So, now what do I do?

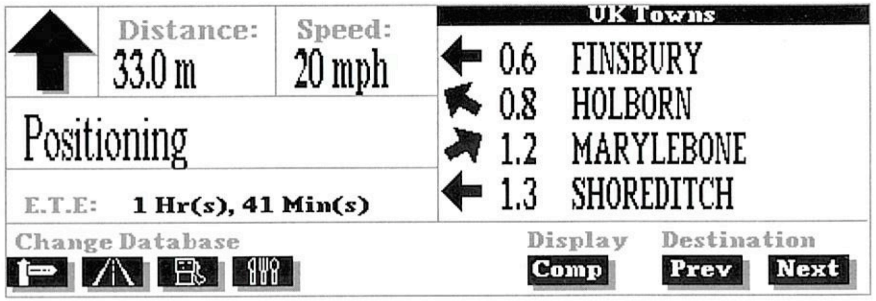
Once the hardware is set-up, the next step is to get yourself some suitable software. Unfortunately there is really no Psion-compatible GPS software for use outside the UK at present, though we understand that the *Geodis* shareware program may soon offer support for parts of Europe and the USA.



Mapper-3a in 'moving map' mode

If you are in the UK (including Ireland) then a good starting point is to try Steve Litchfield's shareware Mapper-3a (reviewed in issue 4 of *Palmtop*). Once the software is loaded and the GPS is connected, accessing it is a simple case of pressing <Psion-G> to enter 'moving map' mode. After a short communication with the receiver you should see a cursor like the one in the screenshot below, showing your position from the data relayed from the GPS with a line pointing in your direction of movement. Now, wherever you go, the cursor will follow.

Microsoft's excellent Autoroute Express for the Psion does does not support any GPS features by default. However, the quick-thinking members of the Psion community being as determined as ever to rectify other people's omissions, led Mike Rudin to write the excellent


Distance:
33.0 m
Speed:
20 mph
Positioning
E.T.E:
1 Hr(s), 41 Min(s)
UK Towns
0.6 FINSBURY
0.8 HOLBORN
1.2 MARYLEBONE
1.3 SHOREDITCH
Change Database
Display
Comp
Destination
Prev
Next

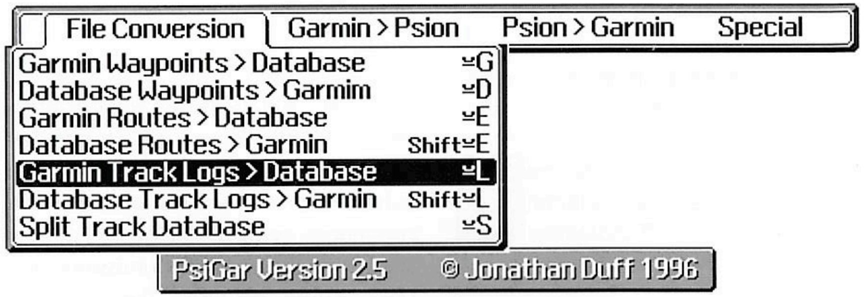
FindIt

AutoGPS. This neat little program will take control of *AutoRoute* and allow its cursor to respond to the GPS's data, giving a moving map display similar to *Mapper-3a*'s. Also, it has its own screen which gives some extra details about the incoming GPS data, such as your grid co-ordinates in text form and an odometer. It integrates very well with *AutoRoute*, and the control is seemingly transparent—it even updates your current position, etc. directly on the *AutoRoute* screen. A quick press of <ESC> on *AutoGPS*'s screen switches back to the normal *AutoRoute*. This program is freeware, and highly recommended for all Psion *Autoroute* users.

Not just mapping...

There are a few other useful utilities designed for a connected GPS. A good example is TDCGPS3a, which is designed to provide detailed NMEA debugging and information, and a limited form of moving map support.

Positioning International Ltd. (makers of the cradle) offer *FindIt*, described as 'satellite road navigation'. It can be used to follow your location, and gives useful information about your surrounding area. By accessing stored databases it can tell you the location of the nearest petrol station, fast food outlets , banks and so on. As well as its 16 in-built databases, *Positioning International* can create customised databases making it useful for specialised commercial requirements. It also features rudimentary mapping—showing junctions approaching road junctions.


File Conversion
Garmin > Psion
Psion > Garmin
Special
Garmin Waypoints > Database ⌃G
Database Waypoints > Garmim ⌃D
Garmin Routes > Database ⌃E
Database Routes > Garmin Shift⌃E
Garmin Track Logs > Database ⌃L
Database Track Logs > Garmin Shift⌃L
Split Track Database ⌃S
PsiGar Version 2.5
© Jonathan Duff 1996

PsiGar

Another way the Psion can be useful is to enhance the GPS's own features. A good example of this is *PsiGar* by John Duff, which is designed for the *Garmin* series. Its main purpose is to transfer various information such as waypoints, tracklogs and routes. These make use of the in-built routing functions of the GPS, so you can plan your route at home, and program the information straight into the unit rather than carrying your Psion around with you. It will then tell you where you need to go, how far you have still to travel, etc. This program is very comprehensive and works extremely well.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Psions and GPS receivers make a good marriage. Attachment to a 3a/3c increases the power of a stand-alone GPS receiver, and the superb portability of the Psion shows just how versatile your palmtop really is.

InfoBOX

Positioning International Limited can be contacted on (01403) 271114 or 276811.

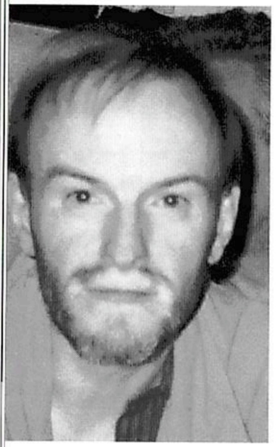
The shareware programs mentioned in this article are all available from the usual sources, under the following filenames:

Mapper-3a
MAPA46.ZIP, MAPB46.ZIP, MAPC46.ZIP

AutoGPS
AGPS10.ZIP

PsiGar
PSIGAR25.ZIP

NMEA utilities
TDCGPS3A.ZIP



JBChat

We talk to the best known author of high quality freeware—John Boyce, and take a brief inventory of his work to date...

by Steve Clack

Almost anyone who has spent time browsing through the wealth of shareware and free software available for the Psion palmtops will have seen certain names appearing regularly. Most Palmtop readers will have come across such titles as *JBData, JBLaunch* and *JBTree,* if only by reading reviews of them within these pages.

As well as being one of the most prolific of non-commercial software authors, John Boyce (the 'JB' in all those program titles) stands out from the others by offering all of his excellent products for free. We talk to John about his involvement in the Psion scene, and a little bit about what motivates him...

Palmtop: "What was the initial motivation to write software for the Psion—how did it all start?"

John Boyce: "It grew up slowly really. I started off with an old *Psion Organiser II.* I have been working shifts in a master satellite control room (dealing with satellite uplinks and downlinks) for 20 years now, and I thought it would be nice to enter my shift pattern into the Psion's agenda. The agenda didn't cater for repeating events in those days, so I wrote a little program to do it myself. I then continued to refine other things on the machine that didn't do quite what I wanted."

Palmtop: "You've written a lot of programs for the Psion now—so why are they all free? Surely there is money to be made in return for all your efforts?"

JB: "It's generally not possible to make a living out of it unless you go into it commercially. I only know of one or two others who have made a success of it. As I don't charge for my software I don't have to feel *committed* to continue or support it, and I don't have all the hassles associated with having an additional taxable income."

Palmtop: "I guess that some people look on you as something of a knight in shining armour because you offer so much good software at no cost. Let's just say there are an awful lot of people who feel that they owe you a beer..."

JB: "I guess that's true, but I write the majority of stuff primarily because it's something *I* need. I will certainly listen to anyone who has a suggestion for an enhancement to one of my programs, but primarily I write software for my own use."

Palmtop: "So what do you use your Psion for?"

JB: "Fairly standard stuff like shopping lists and things, but it gets rid of at least three items: a diary, address book and a calculator. The nice thing about it is that you just pick it up and there it is—your 'brain'. I use Mark Esposito's *Notepad* quite a lot too. It's very good and I've been using it for a long time now."

Palmtop: "You use your Psion for pretty simple things. Do you think a lot of people are trying too hard to do complex stuff with palmtop computers? Do people really want things like Web Browsers for their Psion?"

JB: "I do feel that some people try to make palmtops do things they are not really designed for. I recently saw an article on a new Japanese device that is only available in Japan. It was a similar size to the Psion, and had a colour screen and some kind of stylus. It also incorporated a digital camera, a fully functional Web browser, TCP, agenda, database and so on, for around £1200. I expect they will sell."

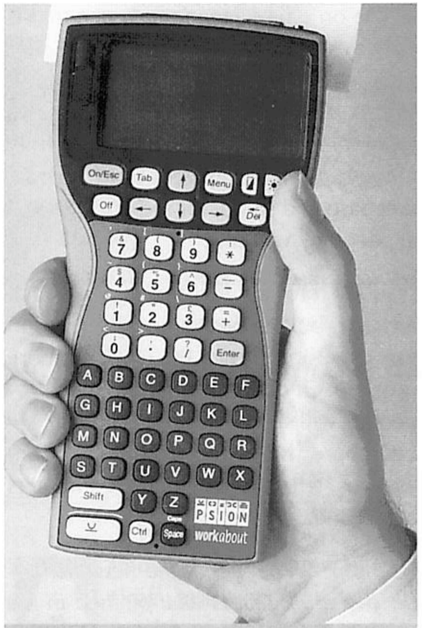
"I don't browse the Web very much anyway, but it's not something I would use my Psion for—a PC is much more sensible. Of course it is possible to do—people will always want to do more—but there have to be limits. More features tend to make the computers bigger too..."

Palmtop: "What about the new Siena—do you think that is well-pitched in the marketplace?"

JB: "I have to say that I don't like the keyboard of the Siena very much. I find that I have to push the keys quite firmly to get a connect—I don't really like the *feel* of the Siena. On the other hand the Psion *WorkAbout* is great for carrying around, because you can hold it one hand and type with the other and everything about it feels firm."

Palmtop: "What technologies do you think are important in the future development of palmtop computers then: like pen-based or voice input for instance?"

JB: "Well, I happen to like keyboards, so I'm probably not the right person to ask. I looked at the Apple Newton when they first came out and thought *hmmm*—I'll stick with my Psion, thank you."



A Boyce-friendly computer—the industrial Psion WorkAbout

"I can see things possibly going in these directions in the future, but handwriting recognition has to be foolproof for it to really catch on—I think we are a few years away from that. It is going to take an awful lot of processing power and a lot of background processing, so you are going to need lightening fast processors."

Palmtop: "What about StrongArm, is that not the answer to all this with new 100 megahertz processors?"

JB:" I wouldn't like to try what I have just described on my 166Mhz Pentium, so StrongArm is not going to be any faster than that. That is why I say I think it is years away. I'm sure it will happen eventually."

Palmtop: "What about integration with communications—like the Nokia 9000 with it's built-in cellular phone?"

JB: "I know everyone is saying that this is the next big thing—I haven't even *got* a mobile phone. I can't imagine anybody using one for more than the absolute bare minimum because of the associated cost. For me a palmtop is literally a portable brain to carry around, not a toy to play with just to waste time. I can see that there are some people that need to get on the Web for information but why use a palmtop when you can use a full-blown computer with a proper keyboard and nice large screen—it is faster as well!"

Palmtop: "Obviously you have invested a lot of time in programming. Have you even considered roughly how much time you have invested in it?"

JB: "I'm sure the total number of hours is something horrendous! It is difficult to quantify to any extent. Because I am not doing it for money there is no real point in doing so either. 'Horrendous' is a good summary for the amount of effort though."

"On a daily basis I guess on average I must program for about two hours a day, and we are talking seven days a week, holidays, etc. There are days when I am not working and will spend the whole day in front of a computer, then there will be other days when I am at work

JBSoft

A summary of current software

Name	*Version*	*Description*
JBData	**1.4.1**	**A sophisticated replacement for DATA**
JBTree	**4.2.6**	**A graphical replacement for the file selector**
JBFind	**2.7b**	**Searches for filenames and text *inside* files**
JBLaunch	**2.7.4**	**Gets around the normal '50 application' limit**
JBSort	**1.3b**	**Fast database sorter**
JBSortB	**1.3**	**Cut-down of JBSort that works in background**
JBBackup	**1.4**	**Transfer to PC with program opening/closing**
JBStopGo	**1.5**	**Runs the link with program opening/closing**
JBCIS	**1.2**	**CompuServe offline reader for ReadCIS**
JBDial	**1.6**	**Use the internal speaker or modem to dial the phone**
JBEyecon	**1.0**	**Picture viewer**
JBNag	**1.0**	**Jump automatically to any application on switch-on**
JBMacFix	**1.0**	**Utility for MACSYS macros**
CvtAgn	**1.0b**	**Convert 3a AGENDA files back to Series 3 'Classic'**
JBWHol	**2.0**	**Puts standard UK and German holidays into AGENDA**
Dupes	**1.0**	**Searches for duplicate files**

JBData was reviewed in issue 2 of *Palmtop*, JBTree in issue 4, and JBlaunch in issue 6. All of the software in this list is available from John's own WWW site, or from the usual shareware sources (see page 99 for more details).

http://www.compulink.co.uk/~jbsoft/

where I may just do it for half an hour. I guess two hours a day is fairly accurate."

Palmtop: "What about OVAL? (see page 73 of this issue) Do you think this new programming environment is going to be very significant?"

JB: "I have to say probably not. I think it is there more for corporate bodies, companies thinking of using it to write custom applications for their workforce. OVAL will be brilliant for that because they will be buying new 3c's (and new *WorkAbouts*) which will have the OVAL support built-in. But for the likes of me and others there is little point in writing in OVAL, because it is only going to run on those machines. I don't think it is going to be of any use to software writers unless you are working specifically for that platform. There are an awful lot of 3a's out there you know!"

"Someone recently said to me 'what is OVAL?' and I said that it is really another OPL, because OVAL is an *interpreted* language, so it is not like 'C', where you end up with something that runs so long as you have got the operating systems calls in place, and is generally much faster."

"I ask myself, 'do we need two interpreted languages?', and I'm not sure whether we do."

Palmtop: "Do you think it will add confusion to the marketplace then?"

JB: "I really do wonder about the long-term options. Unless OVAL does an awful lot more than OPL I can't see why most people don't just use that. OPL can actually do *almost* anything if you are proficient enough. Of course OVAL is not quite with us yet, and until I actually see some OVAL stuff then who knows?"

Palmtop: "Finally John, do you have any major plans—any 'JB' software that we should all be looking out for?"

JB: Well, I am still furiously programming the stuff I have got. The only way I could produce something new is to give up on something else."

"When most of my programs get released I generally think they are 'finished' in the general sense of the word, but then people come up with new suggestions, and the refinement starts. Although I have always said that I reserve the right to give up on a program I have never done so yet—which is not to say that I *won't*. If someone presents me with a problem that I cannot see a solution to then I might just say 'sorry, but I can't do that'."

Palmtop: "So you are running at full capacity now, just maintaining and improving things you have already done?"

JB: "Yes. The focus does tend to change, but that's essentially true."

Palmtop: "Thanks for your time John, and the best of luck for your future endeavours!"

Getting to grips...

Working with WORD

A series aimed at the relative beginner to the Psion's built-in programs.

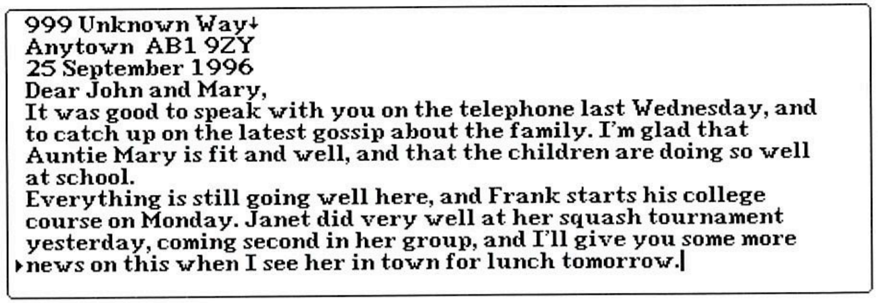
We continue with the fourth part of our tutorial on using WORD, the 3a/3c's built-in word processor...

By Steve Clack

In the last issue we got as far as completing all the address details at the top of our letter, and were about to enter the body of the text. Let's resume the document as before, by highlighting its name from the system screen and pressing the <Enter> key.

The date, salutation and main body of the letter will be in our standard, default 'body text' style already used for the recipient's address. We'll therefore just type this straight in, as the Psion will assume it to be simply a continuation of the 'BT:Body text' style in the preceding lines. Enter something similar to the text given on the following page, pressing the <Enter> key after the date and 'Dear John and Mary,' lines, but *not* after the lines within each paragraph. This will be obvious to most users, but anyone used to using a typewriter rather than a computer will have to forcibly stop themselves from pressing the <Enter> key to manually 'carriage return' to the next line. This is not of course necessary with computers, and the Psion will automatically 'wrap' the text onto each successive line as necessary.

Pressing the <Enter> key between paragraphs *is* necessary though, as this will force a break between each paragraph. Depending upon how you set the various options within WORD there are actually *two* distinct ways in which you can make the space appear between



999 Unknown Way↓
Anytown AB1 9ZY
25 September 1996
Dear John and Mary,
It was good to speak with you on the telephone last Wednesday, and to catch up on the latest gossip about the family. I'm glad that Auntie Mary is fit and well, and that the children are doing so well at school.
Everything is still going well here, and Frank starts his college course on Monday. Janet did very well at her squash tournament yesterday, coming second in her group, and I'll give you some more
▸news on this when I see her in town for lunch tomorrow.|

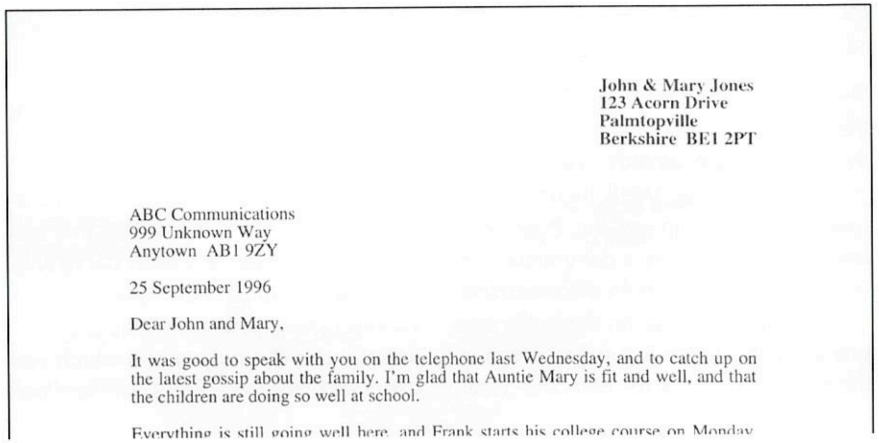
Untidy looking paragraph endings

your paragraphs on the printed page, the first of which is outlined below:

The first option is to enter the text to appear exactly as above. Notice that all the paragraphs (including the date and salutation lines) start on a new line, but there is no clear space between each paragraph. This looks untidy and cluttered when viewed on the Psion screen, but provided that you haven't changed the default WORD settings since you got your machine then the document will print neatly on paper, just as shown below.

This apparently strange behaviour is all down to the 'Spacing' menu. To check what is happening go into the 'Style gallery' option in the 'Styles' menu, and use the left and right arrow keys to select 'BT:Body text' on the top line of the dialog box. Then move down to the 'Spacing...' line and press the <tab> key. This will show the paragraph and line spacing attributes for (in this case) the default font.

The 'Line spacing' option controls the amount of space between each line *within* a paragraph (when it is printed).



John & Mary Jones
123 Acorn Drive
Palmtopville
Berkshire BE1 2PT

ABC Communications
999 Unknown Way
Anytown AB1 9ZY

25 September 1996

Dear John and Mary,

It was good to speak with you on the telephone last Wednesday, and to catch up on the latest gossip about the family. I'm glad that Auntie Mary is fit and well, and that the children are doing so well at school.

Everything is still going well here, and Frank starts his college course on Monday

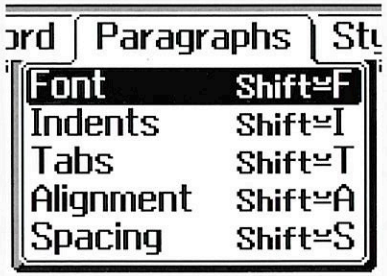
WORD on the 3c and Siena

It's important to interrupt this article to point out a few minor changes between the WORD application on the Series 3a, and the slightly different versions on the 3c and Siena machines. This is necessary for 3c/Siena owners to make sense of the previous articles in the series, and to prevent any confusion in the future.

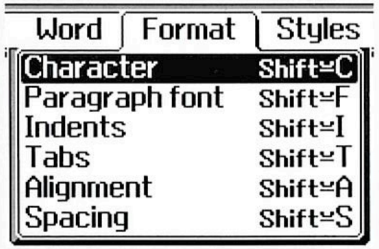
The important differences are as follows:

The 'Paragraphs' menu on the 3a has been renamed to 'Format' on the 3c. This is simply to make the name of the menu more accurately describe its function. Strangely the 'Paragraphs' menu keeps its old 3a name on the Siena, but appears as an option under the 'Word' menu instead. This is because the narrower display of the Siena is too small to fit all of the eight menu titles side-by-side across the screen.

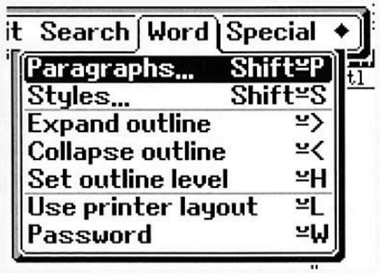
Once in the 'Paragraphs' menu the Siena options are identical to the 3a, but the 3c menu has changed slightly: the 3a 'Font' menu option has been renamed to 'Paragraph font' on the 3c (as the options within it always apply to entire paragraphs), and another menu option called 'Character' has appeared. This gives a quick and easy way to apply emphases such as bold and underline to any block of highlighted text. This feature is not available on the 3a or Siena.



The 3a 'Paragraphs' menu



The 3c equivalent—'Format' menu



Access to 'Paragraphs' on the Siena

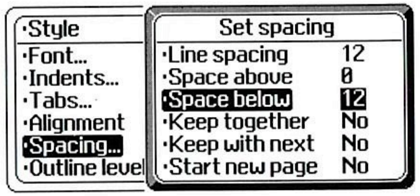
WORD on the 3c and Siena

There are some other small differences to note between the larger 3a/3c machines and the Siena:

- **Because of the smaller screen size the 'Styles' menu is accessed from within the 'Word' menu, just like the 'Paragraphs' menu. The features are otherwise *exactly* the same as the 3a (not 3c)—you just need to use the extra keystroke to access these menus.**
- **The Siena does not have the spelling checker and thesaurus of the 1Mb/2Mb 3a and 3c. Owners of 256K and 512K 3a owners should note that this is available as a separate SSD add-on from all major Psion dealers. The SSD version is identical to the 3a version.**
- **3c users should note that the word definitions found on the 3a and SSD spell checker/thesaurus do not appear on the 3c. These had to be removed to make room for some of the additional built-in software.**

All future articles will outline differences between the 3a, 3c and Siena wherever appropriate.

If you want single line spacing you should set this value to the same number as the *point size* of the font you are using, or to twice the value if you want double line spacing, etc.



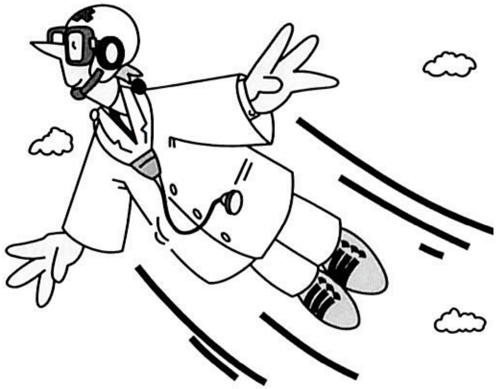
Set spacing
·Line spacing 12
·Space above 0
·Space below 12
·Keep together No
·Keep with next No
·Start new page No

The 'Space above' and 'Space below' options control the size of the gap WORD will automatically put between each paragraph when it is printed. The 'Space below' was set to 12 points (the unit of measurement used) for the print example on page 60, and this is what caused the paragraph spacing to look neat on paper, despite the bunched-up appearance on screen.

We'll discuss these important spacing issues in more detail in the next issue, and explain a simple alternative method to make your documents look more readable on screen, and still print out correctly. In the meantime, you may like to experiment with different settings from this menu to see how they affect your printouts.

Programmers' Surgery

The continuation of our regular feature in which Rick ("The Doc") Andrews addresses your programming questions and woes...



Where OPL and ears meet. BEEP! Pardon?

I would like to see some discussion of using sound in OPL programs. The programming manual gives only a bit of information which I have been unable to get working. What are the differences between playing the built-in alarm .WVEs and user-recorded .WVEs? How can I play each from within my OPL programs?

John Linn
Upstate New York, USA.

The Psion OPL Programming Manual explains how to play a WVE file from within OPL, and although it's not very clear, it's worth persevering, as all the information is there. To help, the `PlayWVE:` code given below shows a wrapper for the two example procedures to clarify how they should be called. (The procedures are given in the *Advanced Topics* chapter of the manual.)

This `PlayWVE:` procedure has a dialog which prompts for the sound name. Give the whole filename (e.g. `M:\WVE\RECORD01.WVE`) to play that sound, or just the

name part preceded by a '`*`' (like `*SYS$AL01` for Rings) which makes it search the ROM, then the \WVE\ directory of M, A and B. If you have a 1Mb/2Mb 3a, try `*pop` here!

As the manual explains, you can start the sound and wait for it to end before moving on (this is known as 'synchronous' playing), or choose to start the sound and let it play in the background while performing other actions (asynchronous playing). This asynchronous playing is useful in situations like a game, where you don't want the graphic action to stop when a sound plays.

There are no real differences between the built-in alarm sounds (like *Fanfare, Soft bells* and *Church bell*) and user-recorded ones, except that a couple of the alarms (*Rings* and *Chimes*) are a bit cheeky because they're not digital samples and they don't have WVE files. For these synthesised sequences, you should use the `PlayAlm:` procedure as shown below. (Thanks for *Joegriffin@cix* for this).

Lastly, don't forget you can also program the two-voice sound device (SND:) as shown in the 'Two-voice "ice-cream van" sound' example in the manual.

```
PROC PlayWVE:
  LOCAL name$(128), mode%
  LOCAL status%
  LOCAL duration, tick%
  name$ = "*sys$al01"
  WHILE 1
    dINIT "Playing WVEs"
    dEDIT name$, "Sound name", 10
    dTEXT "", "(Use *sys$al01,2, or 3 for alarm sound)", 2
    dCHOICE mode%, "Play mode", "Play and continue,Play and
wait"
    dFLOAT duration, "Duration in secs", -999, 999
    dTEXT "","(Use negative value to pad with silence)", 2
    IF DIALOG=0 :RETURN :ENDIF
    tick% = duration*32
    IF mode%=1 REM Asynchronous
      playa:(ADDR(status%), name$, tick%, 5)
    ELSE REM Synchronous
```

```
      playw%:(name$, tick%, 5)
    ENDIF
  ENDWH
ENDP
PROC PlayAlm:
  LOCAL return%, handle%, achoice%
  LOCAL alarm&
  WHILE 1
    dINIT "Play alarm"
    dCHOICE achoice%, "Alarm sound", "Rings,Chimes"
    IF DIALOG=0 :RETURN :ENDIF
    return% = IOOPEN(handle%, "SND:", -1)
    alarm& = achoice%-1
    IOW(handle%,9,alarm&,#0)
    IOCLOSE(handle%)
  ENDWH
ENDP
REM playa: and playw%: are shown in the Psion
REM Programming Manual - Advanced Topics section
REM "Recording and playing sounds"
PROC playa:(pstat%,inname$,ticks%,vol%)
  LOCAL name$(128)
  name$=inname$+CHR$(0)
  CALL($1E86,UADD(ADDR(name$),1),ticks%,vol%,0,pstat%)
ENDP
PROC playw%:(inname$,ticks%,vol%)
  LOCAL name$(128),p%,ret%
  p%=PEEKW($1c)+6   REM address of saved flags after CALL
  name$=inname$+CHR$(0)
  ret%=CALL($1F86,UADD(ADDR(name$),1),ticks%,vol%)
  IF PEEKW(p%) AND 1     REM carry set for error
    RETURN ret% OR $FF00 REM return error
  ENDIF
```

For SALE

512Kb Series 3a, as new - £150

also *512Kb RAM SSD* - £50

Contact: Dave Stirling
tel: (01452) 723674

2Mb Series 3a in very good condition - £200

also *3Fax* modem, hardly used - £100

also *Pipemania* game - £10

All complete with manuals, etc.

Contact: Paul Berks
(01325) 489610

ENDP

For SALE

Purple Software Cyclone floppy disk drive for the Series 3a. As new, boxed with all manuals, etc. - £130

Contact: Mr T S McClure
tel: (01478) 613168

RangerDisk floppy disk drive for Series 3a. As new condition with mains power supply unit and manual. Can also supply cable for Series 3 and/or MC400 at no extra charge - £80 ONO.

Contact: Richard Chandless
tel: +33 50 442 491 (France)
fax: +33 50 442 930

Citizen PN60 portable printer - half price at £150 including postage.

Contact: John Cameron
tel/fax: (0141) 3572516

Psion Money personal finance software on SSD (with manual) - £25 ONO

Contact: Phil Taylor
tel: (01372) 727510
or 106144.146@compuserve.com

Psion Around The World

For the fifth in our series looking at Psion-related groups and services, we examine PEAT, the user group of Toronto, Canada...

True to its name, the Psion Enthusiasts' Association of Toronto—known to its friends as PEAT—is an active and growing user group. It is *the* place for Psion users in and around Toronto to meet, share information, and learn more about the Psion.

PEAT was founded in December 1995 by Lloyd Wasser, a long-time Psion evangelist, and now President of Widget Software's Canadian company. The group of six that gathered at PEAT's first meeting has grown with each passing month: there are now over 110 names in its membership database, and an average of 25 attendees at each monthly meeting.

PEAT members come from a wide range of professions, including sales, the academic world, medicine, finance, and consulting. Most members are based in Toronto, while others travel from outlying suburbs and the surrounding region to attend meetings.

Each PEAT meeting begins with introductions from new members and visitors, and updates from 'old hands.' These are followed by presentations on Psion hardware and software products by invited guests, and the ever-popular 'tips and tricks' time, during which members share questions and solutions for the Psion.

To date, guest speakers have included David Elder, formerly of Psion Inc. and now VP of Compulys Data PLC, Jacques Gourmelon of Compulys Data (Canada), Ali Manson, Technical Director of Psion Inc. (USA), and of course Lloyd Wasser of Widget Software (Canada). Plans for future speakers include representatives from Microsoft and Symantec, who will discuss third-party programs ported to the Psion platform.

As PEAT grows in numbers and activities, efforts are being made to meet the group's expanding needs and to keep members and friends informed of upcoming activities. At present, notices of meeting agendas are posted in appropriate CompuServe forums and Usenet newsgroups, as well as on the WWW site of club President Blake Nancarrow: (http://www.computer-ease.com/ce/).

A print-format newsletter (edited by Blake Nancarrow, with the assistance of Keeman Wong) goes out to all members. And, in order to enable ongoing contact *between* meetings, a PEAT Internet mailing list, set up and moderated by Alan Thwaits, has recently been launched.

A celebration of the first anniversary of the Psion Enthusiasts' Association of Toronto is currently being planned. If it's anything like the group's monthly get-together it will be a time of camaraderie, good cheer, and high-level information exchange. And, if PEAT's first year is anything to go by, the party will be only the first of many more to come!

Alan Thwaits

Alan Thwaits is a freelance writer based in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

He can be reached at:
praxcomm@idirect.com

Beta testers wanted!

For an almost complete Service Engineer Management application which records all service call information, and includes a customer and equipment database and a parts management program.

It is written specifically for office equipment engineers, but can be adapted for any service environment. The parts program and notebook facility can be supplied by themselves.

The program will be supplied to anyone who promises constructive criticism, and is happy to pay for postage and supply a 3½" floppy disk or an SSD with at least 35K of free space. You will also be required to sign a non-distribution agreement.

Please send details of your job and your full name and address with your request for the software to:

Chris Barron
39 Orchiltree Crescent
Mid Calder
Livingston
West Lothian EH53 0RT

"On The Net"

The latest gossip from the Information Superhighway

Pete Sipple takes a look at the latest Psion news, views and gossip from the various Internet discussion groups. Over the last few weeks there's only been one headline—the new machines…

The top story following the launch of the Series 3c 'illuminated' the newsgroups, and the arguments continue. The US Series 3c has a backlight, the non-US counterpart doesn't. Have Psion made a big mistake?

"I have phoned back Psion who have confirmed—no backlight for the UK. I was tempted to buy a 3c, but I don't think I will now, out of principle. I believe someone here mentioned that some good rival products are on the way."

(lmellor@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"I will only upgrade if I can obtain a version which provides backlighting. Why should we in the UK be treated any differently to those in America? After all, it is us who built Psion into the company it is today."

(willsher@sol.co.uk)

"The only justification I can find is that to compensate for the reduced space required by the US spell checker they added in a little light. Think of it: all the 'u's they were able to drop in the US dictionary (flavour, colour, favour, labour, etc.), and other words such as 'programme' which get truncated. OK, there is the jealousy aspect of 'why do Americans get the light and the rest of the world don't'. But think of it, if the keyboard isn't lit, what good is a backlit screen? As long as I still need a torch to use my psion in a tent in the middle of nowhere at night the backlight won't do me any good."

(jfmezei@videotron.ca)

"Psion may have underestimated the power of the Internet and figured that folks outside the USA would not know about the backlight feature and hence not feel neglected. Psion may have been aware that there would be some backlash, but this may have been a calculated risk and they were willing to live with the few lost sales in the UK."

(jfmezei@videotron.ca)

"I bet that UK 3c's have a disabled backlight. Next year Psion will announce that they can be upgraded for only £49.99. Psion will keep them for a few days, then flick an internal dipswitch, and bingo!"

(tjw@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"I'm happy with my 3a. A backlight will just waste batteries and I'm not going to buy a 3c just for that. The 3a is still a great, viable machine, which I plan on using for years to come. It's flawed thinking that you must buy the latest new version. If everyone who had a desktop computer did that, we'd all be broke!"

(tristtom@aol.com)

When word spread, petitions, e-mails and faxes were just some of the suggested ways of making Psion see the *light...*

"The response to my petition message has been simply amazing. As I think I mentioned earlier, Psion UK were 'absolutely stunned' by the user reaction on Monday. We managed to keep their telephone switchboard and fax lines busy for most of the day. This has definitely not gone unnoticed, so let's hope that a warning shot has been fired to Psion UK's marketing department—not to make the same mistake when the Psion 4 gets launched later next year."

(100010.3413@compuserve.com)

"I appeal to all existing Psion users and potential Psion users to boycott the new 3c. The fact that they do not provide potential UK customers with a choice of the backlit 3c is an INSULT to us all."

(akwan78071@aol.com)

"All this talk of boycotting Psion and refusing to buy the 3c seems to be getting a little out of hand, no? Ok, I admit that I'm a little pi**ed off at the prospect of the UK receiving an inferior product to one released across The Pond, but let's not all start threatening financial ruin on one of the most successful British companies of recent years."

> **" I bet that UK 3c's have a disabled backlight. Next year Psion will announce that they can be upgraded for only £49.99."**

(aw49@cityscape.co.uk)

"I bought a video camera last week. I gather the model I bought is available in Japan, but at a higher price and with more 'features'. Should I write to the chairman of Sony telling him I will never buy another Sony product because of the disgraceful way they have behaved towards their UK customers? I don't think so."

(pauld@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"I think you've missed the point somewhat. The whole point of the majority of the 'petulant tantrums', as you so delicately put it, is that it's available in one country and not the one it was designed in. It doesn't really matter that it's backlighting. It could equally be just about anything else."

(maveya@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Days after the new Series 3c's hit the shelf, users had their say...

"The (Emperor's) 3c has no clothes. The truth is that the 3c HAS NO NEW FEATURES WORTH TALKING ABOUT. This is not a new model. What's it got? i) New serial interface. I have to buy YET ANOTHER copy of PsiWin to get hold of this cable. ii) An Infrared port which apparently won't talk to anything but other Psions and printers. Seeing as I never connect to other Psions or printers then this is also a non-feature. Correct me if I've overlooked something like more memory, faster processor, better screen, voice recognition, etc.

> **"The truth is that the 3c has no new features worth talking about. This is not a new model."**

On the software side—some new embedded applications. Big deal. Most of the functionality offered by this is already available as shareware. I'm sure there are some nice touches to existing applications, but is that *it* Psion? Is that the sum total of the 3c, some improved applications?"

(tdenson@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"I gave in this morning and bought myself a 3c, but it was returned for a refund this afternoon. Why?

1) For me to get three cables to allow me to have one permanently connected to my home and office PCs and one for my modem, I have to buy 3 copies of PsiWin to get hold of the proprietary cables. I think not (are Psion losing it?)

2) The new rubberised case is awful. Pick it up and put it down and you've got 'greasy' fingerprints on it. The finish is the type that doesn't make for easy cleaning i.e. wipe the mark and you're left with a smudge."

(100125.3225@compuserve.com)

"I have finally got my 3c. As a hardened 3a user I think the improvements to the software are great, and the promise that the integrated serial port will bring is well worth the investment. I HATE the rubber case though. I have no idea why Psion changed from the classic case. I have to say that it looks cheap. I still have my original Series 3 and it looks great. I'm not so sure that the 3c will look so good in even a few months."

(100411.2311@compuserve.com)

The new Infrared facility... just how useful is it?

"Will there be a TV controller app? Program your video?"

(nickle@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"Even better, can it capture IR alarm signals and then be used to steal cars? This would soon pay for the Psion, new PsiWin, new cables, etc., which I seem to have to buy every time they bring out a new machine!"

(clarand@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"No. The IrDA hardware works at a different frequency from the TV (ASK) style hardware."

(baldwina@cix.compulink.co.uk)

"The Infrared transceiver is great. At last, fast data transfer without the usual mass of 'spaghetti'. But hang on a minute—apparently I can't use the IR to send data to Centronics or RS232 devices. I can't even use my old parallel and serial 3Links. Does this strike anyone else as being ever so slightly silly? Well, at least the 3c has a standard RS232 port (which looks rather flimsy to me) so a new serial cable should be fairly cheap. Er, no actually. According to Psion I'll have to buy the new version of PsiWin along with the cable. That's not awfully useful to those of us that don't have Windows PCs. I'm looking for a pocket computer to replace my overloaded 3a, but the 3c is not it. Close, but no cigar."

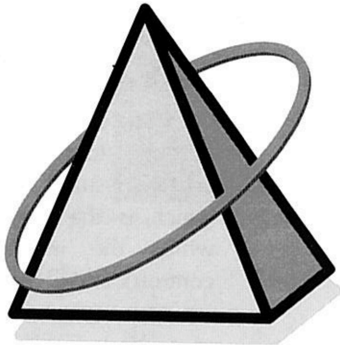
(t.giles1@physics.oxford.ac.uk)

Psion related discussions take place in the comp.sys.psion.misc Usenet newsgroup, as well as the Psion conference on CiX, the Psion area on AOL, and the Palmtop A forum on CompuServe.

Pete Sipple

OVAL

—Applications go egg-shaped



Leigh Edwards gives a brief introduction to an important new addition to the 3c user's programming arsenal—Object-based Visual Application Language—OVAL

No, it's not the famous cricket ground, or the office in the White House or an asymmetric circle—it's the new visual programming system from Psion.

In brief, it's Visual Basic for the Psion, 'Object-based' just refers to the way of working when developing an application. OVAL is code-compatible with Microsoft Visual Basic and includes over thirty application controls specially designed for building Psion applications and take full advantage of the powerful EPOC operating system. In general, if you know VB, you will be well on your way with OVAL.

To develop in OVAL, you'll need the Windows-based development environment which features an intelligent source code editor, code translators for Psion computers and the aforementioned application controls. Developers design applications graphically in a PC-based integrated development environment (IDE) and test them using a suitable Psion computer connected via a serial link cable.

To run OVAL applications the Psion ***must*** contain the OVAL run-time interpreter, this is currently limited to the Psion 3c and its industrial relative the WorkAbout. OVAL applications will be distributed to suitably equipped users by the usual methods.

Developing in OVAL requires a PC-compatible computer with: 80386 CPU or better, a colour VGA display, 4Mb RAM (8Mb recommended), 2Mb disk space and a serial link connection (e.g. *3Link* cable, *PsiWin,* etc.). The OVAL

IDE will run under the following operating systems: Windows 3.1 or higher, Windows 95, Windows NT 3.5 or higher, OS/2 2.1 or higher.

The basic elements of an OVAL application are 'forms' and 'controls'. Every program usually has at least one *form*, which is the graphical backdrop on which the interface elements (or controls) are placed, i.e. menus, user input, text, graphics, etc. A form appears as a window when the application is run, and a form is required for each window or dialog used in the application.

Example controls are: text, menus, buttons, input fields, and each control has information associated with it: its physical appearance, its current state, the things the user can do to it and with it (its events), and the code that determines what the application does in response to a given event.

All the information relating to a control is stored in its *properties*. For example, the pressed or un-pressed state of a button is a property, so is its size, position on the form, its colour, etc.

Imagine a control such as a button. It has an appearance and a state—on or off. It responds to one event, when it gets pressed. When pressed, OVAL changes the appearance and state of the button, and generates a suitable event. Usually a procedure will have been written, in OVAL BASIC, to specifically handle such an event, OVAL then executes that procedure. The procedure might, for example, display a dialog box, quit the program, etc.

You can get information from a control by looking at its properties, and you can also set the properties in order to change the appearance, behaviour or state of the control. If your code sets the 'state property' of the button to 'on', OVAL will change the button's appearance just as if it had been pressed. Some controls are hidden and do not actually appear on the screen, but are useful nonetheless. A good example is the Timer control, which simply generates an event after a specified period of time.

In Summary

OVAL introduces visual programming and rapid application development and prototyping to the Psion environment. It appears to be a very powerful and flexible programming system, but although it will dramatically speed up application development I doubt if the applications themselves will win any prizes for speed.

It will take quite some time for OVAL applications to become commonplace, due to the initially limited customer base. However this situation is likely to be very different in the corporate world, which I believe is Psions' real target market for OVAL.

Computers you can wear

Leigh Edwards looks into some interesting prospects for the future of portable computing...

To some, the whole concept of *wearing* a computer may seem pointless or even bizarre. Hundreds of years ago the idea of a clock you could wear must have seemed crazy to many people, until the invention of the pocket watch of course. The suggestion must have conjured up images of people clanging along with the equivalent of a grandfather clock strapped about their person. Just as, four or five years ago, the idea of a wearable computer would have inspired similar thoughts of someone staggering under the weight of a box full of assorted electronics, banks of RAM chips, a large hard disk and enough batteries to start a small car. But now, thanks to rapid technological advances, they are becoming a reality. Products like the Series 3a are exciting steps in the right direction, but personal computers will only be truly personal when they have faded into the background, just like the wrist watch.

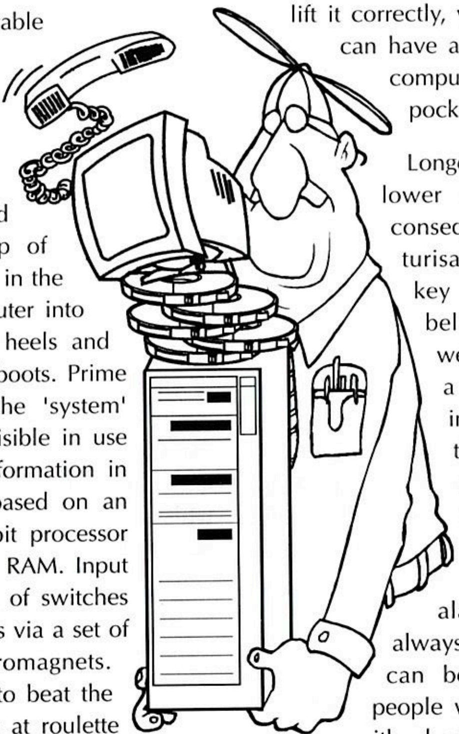
There's big money in it

Some serious thought and money is going into this field and some of the results will have a direct bearing on the evolution of products from companies like Psion. Over thirty major companies are currently funding a research project which is aimed at making 'dumb' objects like clothing, 'smarter'. In this article I'll present an overview of some of the current products, describe the major obstacles and the research that is underway to overcome the problems. I'll also do some speculation about likely outcomes, especially those potentially relevant to you as a Psion user.

You may not have considered it, but the Psion in your pocket, handbag (now, even gun-style holsters), was carefully designed to be 'wearable'. With its textured rounded surfaces, modest weight and size, it fits snugly into a pocket or handbag without causing its owner to walk with a list or appear to be packing a 44 Magnum. Rival products that failed these simple but vital criteria have generally enjoyed little success.

Nothing is new

The idea of a wearable computer is not new, but the motivation to make one may have changed. In the late 1970s and early 80s a group of graduate Physicists in the USA built a computer into the hollowed out heels and soles of a pair of boots. Prime requirements of the 'system' was that it be invisible in use and fast to get information in and out. It was based on an Intel 6502 eight bit processor and around 6K of RAM. Input was through a set of switches and the output was via a set of vibrating electromagnets. They were trying to beat the Las Vegas Casinos at roulette and had a fair degree of success—until they were discovered. Input data represented the start point and speed of the ball, and the output pattern of buzzers predicted the quadrant of the wheel to bet on. Today the functionality required by users is a lot more demanding, if less profitable.



IT off the desktop

In the computing and communications fields it's amazing what sales volumes can do for miniaturisation and price. Ten years ago the most 'compact' portable PC available weighed enough to displace several vertebra if you didn't lift it correctly, whereas today you can have a powerful palmtop computer placed in a shirt pocket.

Longer battery lives and lower weight are usual consequences of miniaturisation, but another key factor which I believe will make wearable computing a reality is the close integration of real-time processing power with personal mobile communications. With its various alarm functions always on duty the Psion can be a real asset to people with a busy life, or with a bad memory like mine. If you closely couple a cellular phone, a 'personal organiser' and suitable software then you have the potential to transform peoples lives—the mobile office suddenly begins to make sense.

Receiving (as well as sending) faxes will be just the beginning. For people with access to e-mail there will be no need to remember to log in periodically to check for messages. A service provider will store messages and forward them automatically when your line is free. The 'organiser' could be primed to let you know when something important has arrived.

Soon, all top-of-the-range palmtops will feature integral communications, and the mobile phone will become the equivalent of a sound card and modem. Then access to a vast array of up-to-the-minute information—wherever you are—will become a reality.

What's in the shops now?

In researching this field I was easily able to find at least five suppliers with a variety of products available. For example, how about a 486 to hold up your Levis? Computer Products and Services Inc. (CPSI, Fairfax, VA USA) supply a system called the 'Mobile Assistant'. It's an Intel-based computer you wear on a belt around your waist, complete with 340Mb hard disk, a lithium-ion battery unit and a high resolution head mounted display. Forget images of virtual reality helmets, this is a tiny (18mm) unit which can be put in front of your eye(s) without unduly restricting normal vision. And if you have a cool $10,000 to spend, they can offer an impressive range of options to go with your cellular modem, including satellite-based global positioning.

Of course, at those prices and levels of intrusion on your dress sense, current offerings are only feasible for specialist requirements or the more affluent followers of techno-fashion. It brings to mind a high-tech variant of the classic line from Mae West: "Is that a mainframe in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see me?" Seriously though, it has only been a relatively short time since computers used to occupy suites of rooms, nowadays some will even fit in a credit card. The main reason that palmtop computers are still so large is due to current limits imposed by the human interface: e.g. relatively big keyboards to accommodate big fingers, screens big enough to address the limitations of human vision, and so on.

More sinister applications of wearable systems have also been developed and implemented, like tagging of criminals to keep them within defined limits, and some examples even have the ability to deliver an 'electrical corrective signal'—ouch! Military research has lead to field testing of the 'land warrior': a smart uniform with a host of 'intelligent' two-way communications capabilities.

A new way of talking

Problems of processing power, size, battery life and weight are already well on the way to being solved. The crucial issue is making the human/machine interface as simple, natural and nonintrusive as possible. A lot of practical and fundamental research work is being done worldwide to seek innovative solutions in these areas, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the USA is a leading centre for this.

A new way of walking

The team at MIT are also investigating a number of body-derived power sources, like a prototype generator built into a pair of shoes, showing that useful amounts of power (5-8 Watts) can be generated while walking. They have considered a wide range of other power sources: including body heat, upper limb motion, breathing, and even blood pressure—the mind boggles at that one! Imagine trying to explain to the Psion repair department that you fried your 'Series 9' during a bout of road rage.

In the name of science another researcher has taken the old song 'Welcome to my world' to its ultimate. His wearable system incorporates a tiny video camera and microphone which relays sound and images of what he is experiencing onto the Internet for remote viewing by interested observers.

It's good to talk

Some commercial attempts have already been made to change the way we interact with computers, but most have been of limited success for a variety of reasons. Pen-based interfaces have not become as widely accepted as many hoped, mainly because of poor handwriting recognition but also, in my view, because they still require two hands and demand a screen size which makes the unit too large for a pocket. The five key 'Microwriter style' chorded keyboard had its followers, but mastering it took a little dedication and practice. Other innovations such as touch screen interfaces have so far had only limited success in specialised areas.

Since people communicate principally by talking, some believe that the ideal computer interface will be via speech. A lot of progress has been made recently, especially now that additional processors can be dedicated to the task at reasonable cost. The belt-mounted system mentioned earlier has an optional voice-activated Windows™ interface available.

In the reverse direction, i.e. text to speech, some promising research from British Telecom is attempting to humanise the speech and reduce the effects of information overload. A system currently under research takes a long document and reduces it to a brief summary which can be delivered via a very human sounding speech synthesis system. Peter Cochrane, the head of advanced applications and technologies in BT, is taking this whole area of research very seriously. This includes the personal and social impacts of wearable computers, personal communications, and filtering vast amounts of data for its essential information content.

Look into my eyes

For small visual displays it is essential to get the system nearer to the human eye, for example in the form of a head-mounted unit that can be swung in and out of view, or even as part of a pair of spectacles—it's already possible to project an A4 page of information into the eye in a safe and readable manner. However, if your computer can *speak* the information and you can input commands and data via speech, then it may be possible to dispense with a visual display for most of the time.

Some motivation for this sort of technology comes from attempts to assist people with disabilities. Braille strips which 'display' a line of text from a PC screen to a blind person's fingers have been available for some time, as have simple text-to-speech readers—though the last one I tried sounded like Donald Duck breathing helium gas.

Out of your mind

It might seem like science fiction, but thought control of devices such as computers has recently been demonstrated. This was part of a Japanese research project aiming to give people with severe nerve wasting diseases some control over their environment. Even totally immobilised patients are able to focus their mind on one of a number of pre-set learned choices (learned by the system that is) then the system detects a brainwave called P300 and matches it to the patient's choice of action—with around 80-90 percent accuracy, and systems with higher accuracy should be available within a few years.

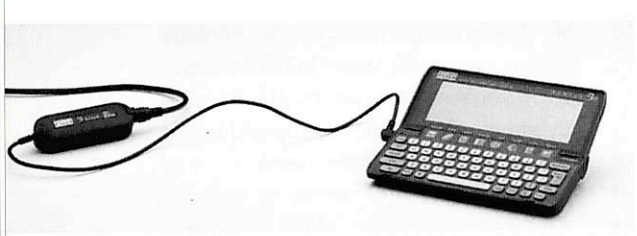
Other more radical research is focusing on direct connections to the nervous system, and with some initial success. So if you're frightened by the idea of Cybernetics or Bionics then you'd better hide—its just around the bend!

Speculative futures

Imagine that instead of your mobile phone ringing, or an embarrassing siren alarm going off in a meeting, that you receive a gentle tingle on the skin under your wristwatch to remind you of your next meeting, or that a message has arrived. Of course, the setting of such electrical stimulation needs to be under your control, or repeatedly ignoring messages from an angry partner may push the voltages to near-fatal levels! You could then 'read' the message via text-to-speech through a tiny earpiece and acknowledge its receipt by a moment's concentrated thought.

Another moment's thought would set an alarm, to remind you to pick up the shopping your partner just ordered, via e-mail, and instructed you to collect (on pain of death or severe electric shock!)

The Amiga connection



Paul Roberts explains how to connect your Psion computer to an Amiga, and how to exchange data quickly and efficiently.

With the Psion being the multi-tasking beast it is, it makes an ideal portable companion to the Amiga. Unfortunately, Psion do not offer any means to connect to an Amiga. However, all is not lost, and there are a number of things we can do to facilitate the connection without the help of Psion. Here's how to do it:

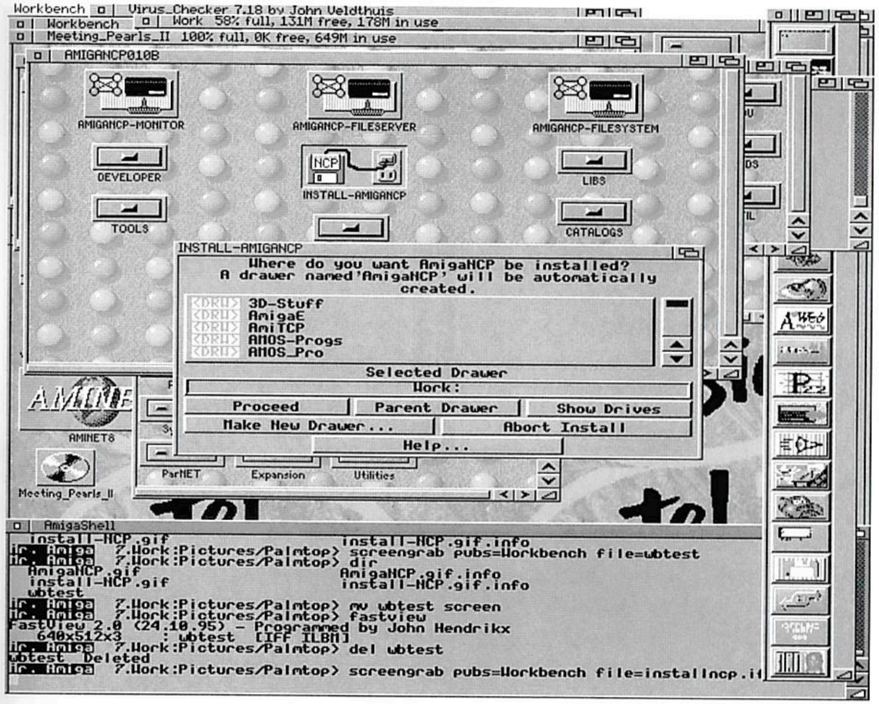
Getting a cable

The first thing you need is a cable. There is no Amiga-specific type available, so this leaves us with the question of which type to buy. There are currently two choices:

- ► PsiWin, which comes with (redundant) PC/Windows software.
- ► The hard-to-get Acorn Link, also with redundant software.

PsiWin is priced at around £80, a lot of money for a cable and a pile of useless floppy disks. The Acorn Link, however, is considerably cheaper, at around half of the cost. Sadly it is very difficult to obtain, as it is generally only available to schools. If you have the opportunity you should certainly buy this in preference to *PsiWin*. A word of warning here: don't buy the Apple Macintosh Link, as the Mac serial (RS232) connector is different to the PC and Amiga type.

If you buy *PsiWin* then it is useful to note that Psion now terminate the cable with a 9-pin connector, so you'll need a 9-way to 25-way adaptor to connect to the RS232 port of your Amiga.



Workbench
Virus_Checker 7.18 by John Veldthuis
Workbench
Work 58% full, 131M free, 178M in use
Meeting_Pearls_II 100% full, 0K free, 649M in use
AMIGANCP010B
AMIGANCP-MONITOR
AMIGANCP-FILESERVER
AMIGANCP-FILESYSTEM
DEVELOPER
INSTALL-AMIGANCP
LIBS
TOOLS
CATALOGS
AMINET8
Meeting_Pearls_II
ParNET
Expansion
Utilities
INSTALL-AMIGANCP
AmigaShell

Where do you want AmigaNCP be installed?
A drawer named'AmigaNCP' will be automatically created.

<DRW> 3D-Stuff
<DRW> AmigaE
<DRW> AmiTCP
<DRW> AMOS-Progs
<DRW> AMOS_Pro
Selected Drawer
Work:
Proceed
Parent Drawer
Show Drives
Make New Drawer...
Abort Install
Help...

```
 install-NCP.gif                          install-NCP.gif.info
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> screengrab pubs=Workbench file=wbtest
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> dir
  AmigaNCP.gif                            AmigaNCP.gif.info
  install-NCP.gif                         install-NCP.gif.info
  wbtest
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> mv wbtest screen
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> fastview
FastView 2.0 (24.10.95) - Programmed by John Hendrikx
   640x512x3     : wbtest  [IFF ILBM]
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> del wbtest
wbtest  Deleted
ir. Amiga   7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> screengrab pubs=Workbench file=installncp.i
```

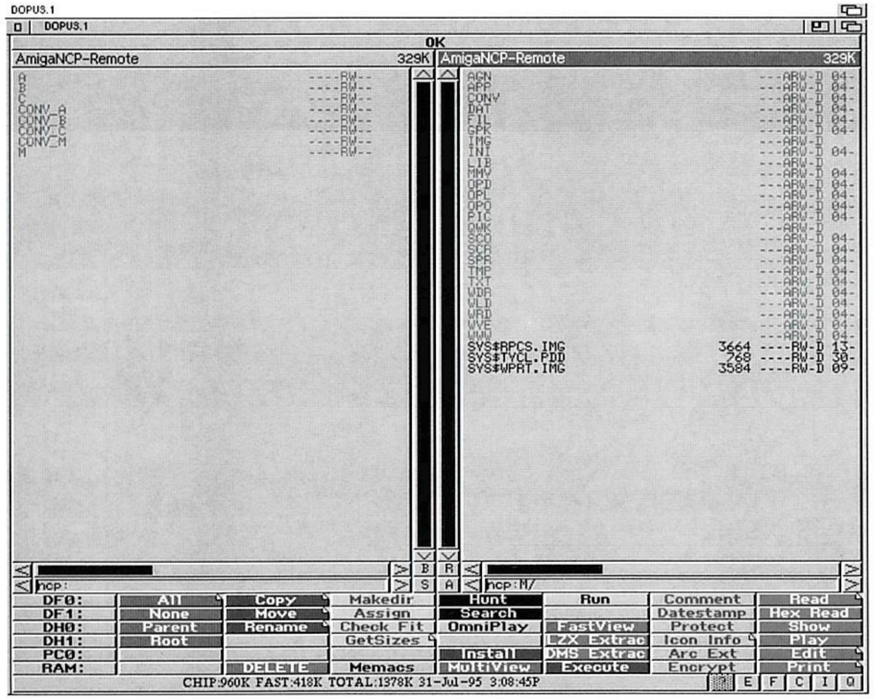
Installing Amiga NCP

One last possibility is to look out for a second-hand cable, or even the older, RCom-based *3Link*, which was a cheaper predecessor to *PsiWin*, and will work equally well. Some older cables even have a double-terminated cable with *both* 9-pin and 25-pin connectors!

The Software

Once you have got your cable, simply plug one end into your Psion and the other into the RS232 port of your Amiga. You will then need to get some suitable software, and this is where we move away from Psion products—which saves us some money!

The first and most basic solution is to use a simple *terminal emulator* connection. This just requires running a terminal emulator program on both computers, and using the transfer features of those to send files back and forth. This rather crude method requires a little bit of setting up, you can only really send one file at a time, and the user interface is very basic. For the Psion end, a usable terminal emulator is built into the *3Link* cable and/or the ROM of the 3a/3c; It is not available with the Siena. To use this, it must be installed on



```
AmigaNCP-Remote                          329K
A                                  ----RW--
B                                  ----RW--
C                                  ----RW--
CONV_A                             ----RW--
CONV_B                             ----RW--
CONV_C                             ----RW--
CONV_M                             ----RW--
M                                  ----RW--

AmigaNCP-Remote                          329K
AGN                             ---ARW-D 04-
APP                             ---ARW-D 04-
CONV                            ---ARW-D 04-
DAT                             ---ARW-D 04-
FIL                             ---ARW-D 04-
GPK                             ---ARW-D 04-
IMG                             ---ARW-D
INI                             ---ARW-D 04-
LIB                             ---ARW-D
MMV                             ---ARW-D 04-
OPD                             ---ARW-D 04-
OPL                             ---ARW-D 04-
OPO                             ---ARW-D 04-
PIC                             ---ARW-D 04-
QWK                             ---ARW-D
SCO                             ---ARW-D 04-
SCR                             ---ARW-D 04-
SPR                             ---ARW-D 04-
TMP                             ---ARW-D 04-
TXT                             ---ARW-D 04-
WDR                             ---ARW-D 04-
WLD                             ---ARW-D 04-
WRD                             ---ARW-D 04-
WVE                             ---ARW-D 04-
WWW                             ---ARW-D 04-
SYS$RPCS.IMG               3664 ----RW-D 13-
SYS$TYCL.PDD                768 ----RW-D 30-
SYS$WPRT.IMG               3584 ----RW-D 09-

CHIP:960K FAST:418K TOTAL:1378K 31-Jul-95 3:08:45P
```

DOPUS.1
OK
ncp:
ncp:M/
DF0:
DF1:
DH0:
DH1:
PC0:
RAM:
All
None
Parent
Root
Copy
Move
Rename
DELETE
Makedir
Assign
Check Fit
GetSizes
Memacs
Hunt
Search
OmniPlay
Install
MultiView
Run
FastView
LZX Extrac
DMS Extrac
Execute
Comment
Datestamp
Protect
Icon Info
Arc Ext
Encrypt
Read
Hex Read
Show
Play
Edit
Print
E
F
C
I
Q

The Amiga NCP directory viewer

your system screen from the 'C:' drive while the *3Link* is connected. See the manual that comes with the link for more details.

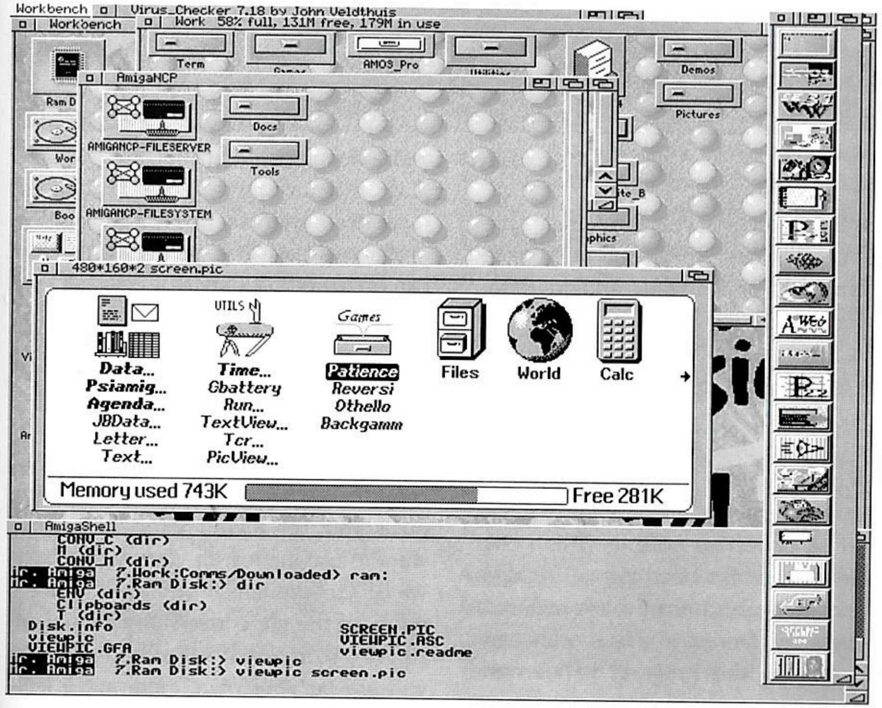
As far as the Amiga is concerned, there is a wealth of basic communications software available: for Amigas running WB2.0 or greater I highly recommend *Term*, while for those using Workbench versions lower than 2.0 I recommend *NComm*. This method is unfortunately the *only* solution for those using versions below 2.0. Once you have the applications installed, you must choose a protocol to use. Of those available to the Psion terminal emulator, *YModem* is the best and should always be selected in preference to anything else.

Settings such as baud rate, number of data bits, stop bits, parity, etc. will also need to be selected, and the golden rule here is simply to ensure that the settings are the same at both ends. Always set the highest baud rate acceptable for both computers (usually 19,200 or 9,600 baud/bps), and 8 data bits, 1 stop bit and no parity are common settings.

Once everything is set it is just a matter of telling one of the computers to send a file, and the other to receive it. This should work reliably, but you must do it on an individual, file-by-file basis. For this reason it is not generally acceptable as a means of performing backups.

A far better solution for connecting your Psion to an Amiga is to use the shareware program *AmigaNCP*, from those people who brought you the wonderful *Voyager* web browser. This program is designed to interface to the Psion in the same way as Psion's own PC and Macintosh programs, allowing all of the devices and files of the Psion to be accessed directly from the Amiga and vice versa. *AmigaNCP* integrates the devices of the Psion into those on the Amiga, so you can use *The Shell* or programs like *Directory Opus* to do all of your remote file manipulation. You can even load files straight from the Psion into your Amiga applications and back again. *AmigaNCP* also allows you to output to a printer connected to the Amiga as if it were connected directly via the Psion's *3Link*.

AmigaNCP can be downloaded from *Aminet*, or from the author's web page. Once uncompressed it is a simple matter of running a standard installer script to install the program, and this worked faultlessly for me. You then have to run one executable to allow the Amiga to access the Psion, and another

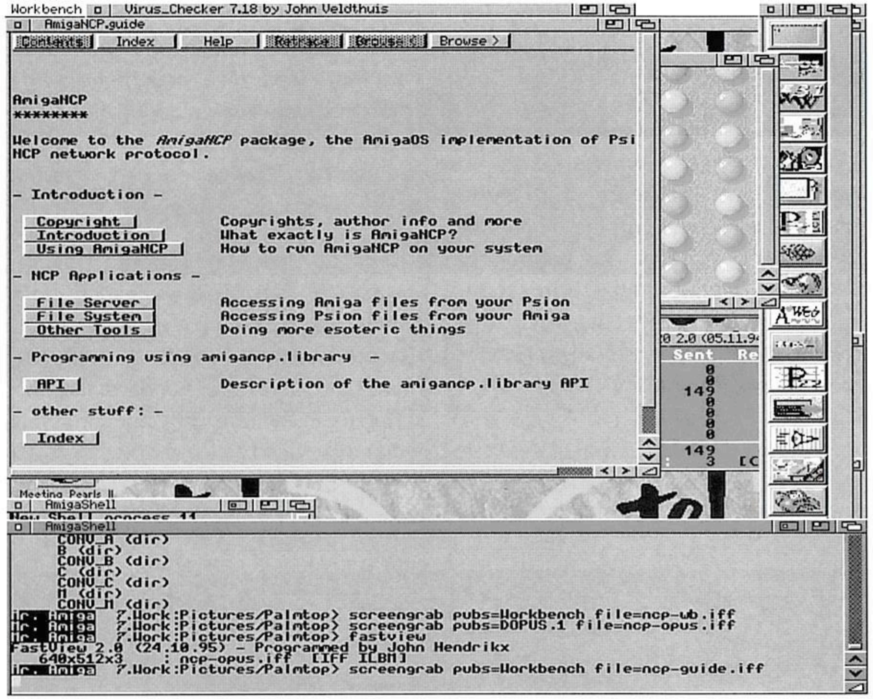


```
Workbench    Virus_Checker 7.18 by John Veldthuis
Work 58% full, 131M free, 179M in use
```

```
    CONV_C (dir)
    M (dir)
    CONV_M (dir)
ir. Amiga  7.Work:Comms/Downloaded> ram:
ir. Amiga  7.Ram Disk:> dir
    ENV (dir)
    Clipboards (dir)
    T (dir)
  Disk.info                       SCREEN.PIC
  viewpic                         VIEWPIC.ASC
  VIEWPIC.GFA                     viewpic.readme
ir. Amiga  7.Ram Disk:> viewpic
ir. Amiga  7.Ram Disk:> viewpic screen.pic
```

Workbench
Term
AMOS_Pro
AmigaNCP
Docs
Tools
AMIGANCP-FILESERVER
AMIGANCP-FILESYSTEM
Demos
Pictures
480*160*2 screen.pic
AmigaShell
Data...
Psiamig...
Agenda...
JBData...
Letter...
Text...
UTILS
Time...
Gbattery
Run...
TextView...
Tcr...
PicView...
Games
Patience
Reversi
Othello
Backgamm
Files
World
Calc
Memory used 743K
Free 281K

Viewing Psion PIC files



AmigaNCP
****

Welcome to the *AmigaNCP* package, the AmigaOS implementation of Psi
NCP network protocol.

- Introduction -

Copyright — Copyrights, author info and more
Introduction — What exactly is AmigaNCP?
Using AmigaNCP — How to run AmigaNCP on your system

- NCP Applications -

File Server — Accessing Amiga files from your Psion
File System — Accessing Psion files from your Amiga
Other Tools — Doing more esoteric things

- Programming using amigancp.library -

API — Description of the amigancp.library API

- other stuff: -

Index

```
      CONV_A (dir)
      B (dir)
      CONV_B (dir)
      C (dir)
      CONV_C (dir)
      M (dir)
      CONV_M (dir)
ir. Amiga  7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> screengrab pubs=Workbench file=ncp-wb.iff
Mr. Amiga  7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> screengrab pubs=DOPUS.1 file=ncp-opus.iff
Mr. Amiga  7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> fastview
FastView 2.0 (24.10.95) - Programmed by John Hendrikx
  640x512x3     : ncp-opus.iff  [IFF ILBM]
ir. Amiga  7.Work:Pictures/Palmtop> screengrab pubs=Workbench file=ncp-guide.iff
```

Amiga NCP's excellent on-line documentation

for the Psion to access the Amiga's files. Once done, the Amiga can be accessed from the Psion with the standard 'REM::' notation. On the Amiga a device called 'NCP:' is created, and the root directory of this device contains a directory for every drive on the Psion. A neat added feature is that the devices can be accessed with a 'CONV_' before the name: this means that any file accessed will be converted from the Psion character set and line feed format to that of the Amiga, and then back again as necessary. During the period I have been using this program it has never shown any problems, proving to be very reliable. In summary this is a great piece of shareware which does everything that can be expected of it.

Interchanging data

Transferring files onto your Amiga is great, but what do you do with them once you get them there? Well, you want to use them with your Amiga software. Unfortunately, *AmigaNCP* does not have the file conversion facilities of *PsiWin*, so if you need to convert files you are on your own. Here are a few guidelines, and programs that may help:

The first thing you will probably want to exchange will be wordprocessor files. Unfortunately I know of no program to convert these, but this is not truly necessary—the Psion can do it all for you. The 1Mb/2Mb 3a's, 3c's and both the Sienas have the facility to save their WORD files in RTF (**R**ich **T**ext **F**ormat—a kind of *Esperanto* for word processors) under the 'Save as' menu option. For the Series 3 and 256Kb/512Kb 3a's, it's a simple case of installing a small RTF-compatibility patch available directly from Psion. You can then transfer these RTF files to the Amiga as above, and load them directly into *WordWorth* or most other Amiga word processors. Failing that, you can save it as ASCII. When doing this using *AmigaNCP*, make sure that you use the 'CONV_*' alias to access the files. If you are not using *AmigaNCP*, then there are many programs that convert PC text files to the Amiga, and many word processors such as the *Lite* version of *WordWorth* and *Final Writer* will do this—just make sure the files are loaded as IBM ASCII or similar.

For spreadsheets, save them on the Psion in WK1 Lotus format, and you will find that any good Amiga spreadsheet can load it.

With the database you must save as ASCII. From the 'Save As' requester of the DATA application set the type to 'TEXT', and then put the delimiter to 'comma'—thus saving in CSV format, supported by most databases.

For other file formats, a few utilities exist for the Amiga:

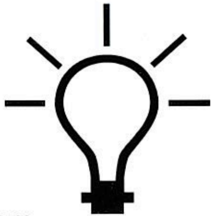
- *Showpic* will display Psion .PIC files on the Amiga.
- To convert them I use *PPaint* to grab and save the screen they are displayed on.
- Another alternative is to use a Psion-based program such as Purple Software's *PicView* to convert between formats, which is the only way I know to convert .GIF and .BMP files to .PIC.
- For Psion .WVE sound files, the *IFF2WVE* utility converts IFF sound samples into this format. I know of no way to convert in the opposite direction.

A last possibility to consider, especially if you have bought the *PsiWin* package, is to use a PC Emulator such as PC-TASK or the *Emplant* cards. These will run Windows, and therefore should run *PsiWin* directly. This also goes for the Macintosh with the likes of *Shapeshifter*, and again the *Emplant* cards.

Once this set-up is acquired and the guidelines followed, you will quickly start to find that your Psion is an extension to your Amiga—what more could you ask for?

AmigaNCP is available from *http://wade1.ab.umd.edu/support/amigancp* - other programs are available from *ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/aminet*

Hints & Tips



More ideas to get the most productivity from your Psion. Ozzie Hall-Osman wins a six-month extension to his subscription for his two simple tips below...

Arrange your applications

It's a good idea to rearrange your application icons on the system screen so that the most frequently used ones are grouped together. This will reduce the amount of scrolling around the screen you need to do to find your favourite programs. Here is how to do it:

- Using the left and right arrow keys, move the highlight on the system screen to the application icon that you use the most. Press <Psion></> to remove the icon from the screen (don't worry, it's not deleted, only temporarily hidden).
- Move the cursor to the far left of the system screen and reinstall the program you just removed into the first icon position. Do this by pressing <Psion><J> and selecting from the pop-up list if you are reinstalling one of the built-in applications (WORD, SHEET, CALC, etc.), or press <Psion><I> and manually select the program name for applications you have added yourself.

When rearranging the other application icons the 'current' position will insert your icon to the *left* of the one currently highlighted.

Multiple applications

You can have more than one file open for any program simply by pressing <shift><Enter> on the filename instead of just <Enter>. During the day I have both my home and work AGENDA files open—this gives me quick access to the two agenda files by simply pressing the agenda button on the softkey pad. This cycles between all open files of that type, so if you have five (or ten!) database files that you use frequently then you can open them all (subject to memory requirements) and use the 'data' softkey to cycle between them. If you press the <shift> key with the softkey this will cycle through the files in reverse order.

Ozzie Hall-Osman
Gravesend, Kent

Document organiser

A novel way to use the to-do function in AGENDA is as a means of organising short WORD documents. Create a new to-do list to store your WORD files, and make a new to-do entry for each one. This allows you to have a 200 character document description as the to-do entry, and to enter your word document all you have to do is attach a memo to the to-do entry with <Psion><+>. You can also search the descriptions with AGENDA's search feature, although you cannot search on text *within* documents until you open them—you can add this ability with a shareware program such as *MemoFind* (reviewed in issue 3 of *Palmtop*).

Note that WORD documents created as memos in this way are limited to around 3,000 characters in size, so take care!

Tag 'em!

Don't forget that when copying or deleting files within the built-in file selector you can always tag more than one file to copy or delete together. Just press the <shift> key together with the up or down arrow key and a small 'tick' mark will appear next to the filename. You can quickly select all files in the current directory by pressing the <*> key, or deselect all files with the </> key. All ticked files will be deleted or copied in a single pass. These commands all work within the FILES application on the 3c too!

Speeding up *3Link* transfers

When transferring a large number of files over the serial link, such as during a backup, the system will constantly update its lists if it is in the foreground. This will considerably slow down the transfer. One simple way to fix this is to move another application to the foreground. Another is to use 'Set Preferences' from the system screen's menu <Psion><Q> and set 'Update Lists' to 'System Button'. Now, it will update only when you press the System button on the softkey strip.

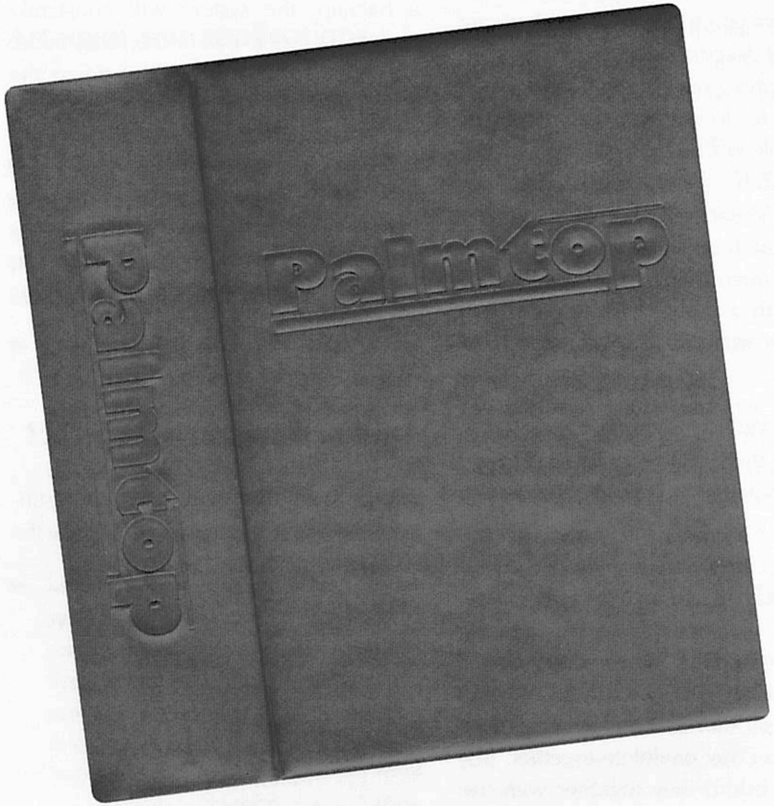
Am I running on a 3a or 3c?

Software authors who need to distinguish between a 3a and a 3c can use the following:

```
ver%=(OS(200,100))+3577
if ver%=0
psion$="3A"
elseif Ver%=63
psion$="3C"
endif
```

Bind it!

Keep your precious back-issues of *Palmtop* in these handsome and sturdy two-tone grey binders. Each binder securely holds six issues plus an index volume, and has the *Palmtop* logo embossed into the thick cushioned vinyl cover and spine



Binders are available NOW, and are on special offer until 31st December 1996 at ONLY £4.20 each, including VAT. The price will increase to £4.50 each from 1st January 1997.

Subscribers outside the EC do not pay VAT, so the price is ONLY £3.57 each!

Binders are limited to 2 per subscriber, and are available only while stocks last.

Postage is charged extra, and rates are as follows:

UK - £1.00 (for 1 or 2)

Europe - £2.00 (1 or 2)

Elsewhere - £4.00 (1 or 2)

Resubscribing

Some readers have contacted us to ask when their resubscription is due. Don't worry—everyone will automatically receive a reminder with their last issue, so there is no danger that you will miss anything.

You do *not* need to resubscribe if you receive a yellow subscription form—this is just something you can pass onto other interested parties. You only need to resubscribe if you receive a personalised letter with your name, address and subscription number on it.

Palmtop Tee shirts

Following on from the enormous response for *Palmtop* binders, a number of readers have also expressed an interest in tee shirts. Please contact us if this is of interest to you, stating what colour(s) you would prefer and whether you would like the shirts to have a small embroidered *Palmtop* logo, or if you prefer a large and bold 'transfer'.

We will have a limited quantity of shirts produced in the most popular colour(s) and styles.

Murgan's Musings

In this first of Stephen Murgan's new regular spots in *Palmtop* he discusses the merits of new technology, and expounds the virtues of the portable computer...

Having been a regular contributor in the past, our esteemed Editor has given me my own little soapbox here in the corner. While it is nice to be eponymous, it must be said that the idea for the title was his and not mine—accuse me not of vanity!

I intend to use this column in a number of different ways. Sometimes it will contain an article, but at other times I will simply be expounding on my view of the world—often with tongue slightly in cheek. Sometimes I will simply ramble about whatever pops into my head...

They say that discussing politics and religion are two of the easiest ways to generate lively debates, heated arguments, occasional blows and in mercifully rare instances, armed retaliation. Among those who are computer literate, there are similar battles being waged every day among those loyal to computer hardware and software. Too many of us are familiar with the 'my-computer-is-better-than-yours' debates. In days gone by, when I was the proud owner of an Atari ST, there was a lot of sniping, testiness and occasionally outright hostility from owners of the Commodore Amiga, which we perceived primarily as a gaming platform. Looking back, with both companies now sidelined, the debate seems so futile and childish. Nowadays, Apple Macintosh users consider their machines superior to IBM-compatible PCs—with good reason—while those with PCs consider their machines to be less proprietary and cheaper than the Apple offerings, with equal justification. I personally consider Apple to be the better machine whose architecture was kept proprietary for far too long, to Apple's eventual detriment.

The battle also rages on the PC desktop. The public fora and newsgroups are full of discussions and comparisons between operating systems. The air is thick with sniper fire, hit-and-run attacks and the omnipresent hype and FUD—particularly when a new release comes out. Technology is a tool, but it is surprising how passionate people get about it.

I consider myself an evangelist for palmtop machines in general and Psion machines in particular. Here in the States, the machine has a profile so low as to be almost invisible. Most of the stores selling the product know nothing about it (Radio Shack being a particularly notorious example), and the public is almost totally unaware of the Psion brand name—I once heard a salesman referring to a Psion as 'A Hewlett-Packard Product'.

Speaking of public image, I noticed that in a recent film ('Executive Decision') the Psion 3a was featured in two new roles: as a diamond-smuggling device, and as a remote-control bomb detonation trigger. While publicity is always nice, I now find myself getting some very strange looks at airports when I produce mine. My advice is to put it through the X-ray machine—I have never lost any data in this way, but don't let that deter you from keeping backups. They may also ask you to demonstrate that it is functional, so make sure that the batteries are working. Finally, don't forget to pick it up as you leave!

The new generation of Psion machines (reviewed in issue 8) are very nice, but they do not make me want to abandon my trusty 2Mb 3a to rush out and buy one. If I were upgrading to a 2Mb machine it would be a different story. While the original Series 3 was ahead of its time and blew the competition out of the water, the 3c is—in my opinion—just holding its own. It is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and with good reason. I shall wait for the Series 4, or whatever it will be called.

Having said that, the Psion machine still continues to impress. The little thing has supplanted my alarm clock, address book, filofax, notebook, calculator and a whole lot more. Additionally, it has helped me to become more productive at times when I would otherwise be just sitting around doing nothing. It has allowed me to enjoy reading many classic books, along with any other document that I need to keep with me, and has been instrumental in my being published in various magazines down the years. I can even play games on it, though I hardly ever find the time! It would be no exaggeration to say that it is more than the sum of its parts.

Sometimes I wonder how I would ever manage without my 'thang' (as I call my pocket-sized silicon friend). Sometimes I wonder how the rest of the world manages without one too.

A little competition...

I don't know any more than you do about the next machine—we all have our wish-lists, but one thing's for sure: it will need a much faster processor. In spite of a well-designed operating system, I find my 2Mb 3a almost too slow at times.

There is a lot of talk about adding Internet functionality to the next Psion. Some might disagree with me, but I would find that a waste of time: a modem would drain the batteries, raise the price and would only be used rarely, though perhaps an optional mains-powered docking station solution might work here. In spite of all the talk about wiring up a 3a to the Web, the lack of colour and slow modem speed would make this both a small market and a frustrating experience. On the other hand an offline e-mail reader would be a nice idea. Being able to use the Psion as a way of handling e-mail sounds both cool and useful. The technology is here now—it's just too clunky—particularly in the hardware department. It just needs to be *consumerised* a little more.

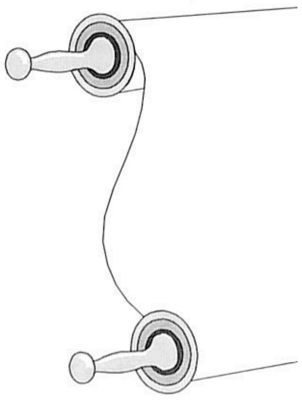
My experiments with David Joyce's Memovoc software (see page 28) has convinced me that speech recognition would be a killer feature, one that is probably still a couple of generations away, but you never know...

Another killer feature that I think would gain wide acceptance is that of hotlinking to a PC. Psiwin is nice, but it isn't exactly state-of-the-art and is now lagging behind some of the competition, which is getting increasingly fierce. Anyone who has seen the US Robotics *Pilot* palmtop in action cannot help but be impressed with its sheer ease of use and peerless integration with the desktop. While not suitable for my needs, this is an excellent piece of kit for those who just want a well-designed organiser, and don't need the added power and flexibility of a pocket-sized computer. I have friends who have seen my Psion but to whom I have recommended the Pilot machine as better for their needs instead—and they're still friends.

I am sure that there are a few orthodox Psionists (!) out there who are reading these words and thinking 'Traitor, we shall cast thee out into the wilderness and smite thee with locusts and frogs!', but I don't really care—choose the best tool for the job, regardless of brand loyalty, and ignore the hype, half-truths and FUD that are spread by some companies when their products don't measure up.

Don't get me wrong, I like my Psion. I still consider it a pocket-sized wonder, and I enjoy writing for it and meeting other Psion users (not easy out here in Kentucky). It does everything I need and still turns heads (it's either the Psion or my DayGlo green socks, I'm not sure which), but keep your eyes on the competition, that's what keeps things moving around here.

The Psion Reference



If you would like to be included in this ever-expanding directory then please send details directly to *Palmtop* for free inclusion

★ New or updated items are marked with a star

Official World Wide Web Sites

Psion UK plc	http://www.psion.com/ The Psion plc (UK) site - the definitive site
★ **Psion Software plc**	http://www.software.psion.com/ Division responsible for licensing ROM based operating system
Psion Inc.	http://www.psioninc.com/ Psion Inc - Press releases and price lists for U.S. users.
Psion GmbH	http://emporium.turnpike.net/P/psion-gmbh/ Psion GmbH (Germany)
Acorn Homepage	http://www.acorn.co.uk/acorn/ Acorn Pocketbook users can access information and press releases.

Psion resources on the WWW

3-Lib Homepage	http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/ Shareware, features, news, software reviews and interviews
★ **Mark Gould's Psion Links**	http://info.bris.ac.uk/%7Elwmdcg/Psion/ Links to just about any other Psion related site in the world
***Palmtop*'s own Homepage**	http://members.aol.com/palmtop/ Information on all aspects of Palmtop Magazine

Psion Online OPL Manual	http://www.primate.wisc.edu/people/dubois/psion/oplman/ Search or browse the online OPL Programming Manual
Psion Programmers	http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/prgers.htm List of software authors, programs, email and web addresses.
The Psionics File	http://www.gold.net/users/cdwf/psion/psionics/ File structure information on AGN, DBF, SPR formats, etc.

Psion retailers

Byson Computers (UK) tel: +44 (0)1635 869480
http://www.hiway.co.uk/~byson/

Clove Technology (UK) tel: +44 (0)1202 302796
http://intertrader.com/computers/clove/

New World Technologies (USA) tel: +1 212 941 4633
http://www.nwt.com

Widget Software Ltd (UK) tel: +44 (0)1438 815444
http://www.widget.co.uk/

Software Authors

Rick Andrews - *Draw*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/chocolate_island_software

Mark Avey - *HangMan, CallCalc, I Ching, CrosWord*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/groucho/

John Boyce - *JBData, JBTree, JBFind, JBLaunch, JBSort, JBBackup, JBDial*
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~jbsoft/

Andy Clarkson - *OPP, Plan*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/andyc

David Clifton - *SpyderX, Spyder9, SpyderT*
http://www.earthnet.net/~eieio/

Nick Dawkins - *Dungeon*
http://www.pavilion.co.uk/users/ndawkins/

Jon Duff - *Icondraw, Convert2*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jon_duff/

Martin Dunstan - *Geni*
http://www-theory.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/export/mnd/geni

Mark Esposito, Pelican Software - *Notepad, Banker, Taskman, BattCheck*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pelican/

Nils Faerber - *FreeVT Terminal emulator*
http://vespa.unix-ag.uni-siegen.de/~nils/freevt.html

Steve Godfrey - *WorldTime, Fonteditor*
http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~steveg/

David Joyce - *MemoVoc, TimeVoc*
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~djoyce/

Thomas Lansing - *PsioMan*
http://www.innomate.de/lansys/psioman/

Steve Litchfield - *Mapper, Mapper London, Mapper Ireland, Slide, Fairway, LifeGuide*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/

Hugh Matthew - *Shoplist*
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Park/3275/

Matt Millar - *Backgammon*
http://www.compulink.co.uk/~windmill/

Mobile Pages - *Database specialists for corporate and personal use*
http://www.mobilepages.com/

Roger Muggleton - *Pocket Packet*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/g0hzk

Daniel Pfund - *DPBank, DPSwitch, DPMime, Splitz*
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/

Alan Richey - *S3Abank, S3Adraw, S3ACollect*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/alanrichey/

Martin Roberts - *PC RAM SSD drive*
http://www2.wildnet.co.uk/~martinr/pcssd.html

Richard Schmidt - *Calc3a, Worklog, Trips3a*
http://www.worldonline.nl/~rschmidt/

Pete Sipple - *BankPlus, Bank, KallCost*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/psipple

★ **Phil Spencer** - *TimeMan and PassAgn*
http://homepages.nildram.co.uk/~nicko/index.htm

★ **Symantec** - *Act!*
http://www.symantec.com/act/fs_actpsion.html

★ **Matt Thomas** - *League Lexicon, Lottery Lexicon, Quiz Lexicon*
http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/parade/nc05/

Simon Webb - *Tube*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/swebb/

★ **John Whiting, Lexden Computer Services** - *Agenda Link*
http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/lexden/

★ **Walter Wright** - *Faxit*
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WalterWright

Discussion Groups

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.reviews

CompuServe Psion discussion	Palmtop A
CiX Psion conference	Psion
Palmtop Magazine discussion	palmtop_mag conference
AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion

Psion Software

Imperial Archive FTP Site	*ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/packages/psion/icdoc/*
Frontiernet FTP Site	*ftp://ftp.frontiernet.net/pub/psion*
★ **New World Technology FTP Site**	*ftp://ftp.nwt.com/*
Cityscape Psion Archive	*ftp://ftp.cityscape.co.uk /pub/psion/*
Usenet Binary Group	*comp.binaries.psion*

CompuServe Psion files area	*Palmtop A* forum
CiX Psion files area	*/files* topic of the Psion conference

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

Posted monthly to the *comp.sys.psion.announce* newsgroup.

Available for FTP download from *news.answers* FTP sites, including rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/

An online version can be accessed from:
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm

Available by e-mail. Send an e-mail message to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu with a message containing the lines "send usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/*" to receive all parts or send a message containing "help" and "index" for more information.

Other WWW Sites

Digital Vision Magazine (Chinese)	http://www.hkstar.com/~micro/
Info on Purple Software Cyclone Drive	http://www.anglianet.co.uk/~sd/psidrive.htm
Psion Club Series 3 (France)	http://alex.union-fin.fr/usr/dcabuzel/psion/clubpsion.html
WAVE Publishing (Germany)	http://www.wave.cube.net/
The Series 4 wishlist	http://www.computer-ease.com/ce/psion/index.html
PSILOnet (Swiss User Group)	http://www.village.ch/psilonet/

Bulletin Boards

Crystal Tower (UK)	+44 (0)817 598 244
Datalink BBS (UK)	+44 (0)1202 660 838 (currently offline for a while)
User Group (UK)	+44 (0)1752 894422
Lonely Times (Germany)	+49 911 393 9034

User Group (The Netherlands)	+31 515 574188
Belgian Psion BBS	+32 3 2262079

Lost or stolen Psion?

It your Psion computer has been lost or stolen then you may be interested to know that a UK user has set up an independent worldwide service to keep track of the serial numbers of such machines. Here is the WWW address of the registry (which shows descriptions and serial numbers only—all personal information is kept offline):

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/groucho

If you do not have WWW access then you can send details by post, or send an SAE for a printed list of missing machines. Please send the following details:

Your name
Address
Telephone number
Description of item lost or stolen
Serial number

Address to send to is:

Mary Avey
39 Union Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 2JN

An introduction to SHAREWARE

In the pages of *Palmtop* you'll read a lot about Shareware. Shareware is a goldmine of useful applications with something for everyone. The quality is amazing—there's so much to chose from, and it's cheap!

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts, shareware is normally supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software then you are expected to send a payment to the author. The programs themselves contain information on use and cost.

Where do I get it?

- Via a modem. Downloaded to your 3a/3c or your desktop computer from a online service such as CompuServe, AOL or CiX (in the UK), from an Internet Service Provider, or from a bulletin board.
- From the *3-Lib* shareware library. Software is supplied on 3½" PC floppy disc. See the advertisement section for details.
- From a PC-format CD-ROM. Available from leading Psion dealers, these discs contain stacks of useful programs and utilities.

How do I use it?

The software will need to be copied onto your Psion. Shareware will normally need un-compressing before you can use it. Programs to do this (such as PKZIP, S3UNZIP, Winzip and Zipit), are freely available from your shareware supplier. Unless you're getting your shareware on SSD, you'll also need some external hardware, such as:

- Serial Lead (3Link). Connect your 3a to a desktop machine (PC, Mac) or a modem.
- Cyclone drive. Connect a 3½" floppy disc drive to your 3a/3c.
- SSD RAM drive. Copy programs to a RAM SSD via your PC's printer port.

Further reading:

Shareware—What, Where & How
Page 43 of Issue 6

Connecting your Series 3 - P41, Issue 5

Going on-line - P40, Issue 1

SSD Drive - P41, Issue 7

CD-ROM - P20, Issue 7 , P19, Issue 4

Cyclone disk drive - P14, Issue 7

Pete Sipple

Psion Shareware by Mark Avey

Your turn...
2 turns left...
BATTLESHIPS

BATTLESHIPS! The classic strategy game now for the 3a/3c. Multiple difficulty levels, save game facility plus many more features. Only £8 ($10 US)

Also available for the 3a/3c:-

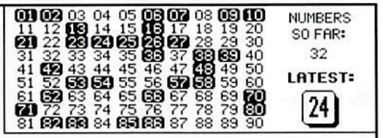
- I Ching - the classic Chinese book of divination - £10 ($15 US)
- HangMan - 10,000 word list will keep you busy for a long time, with the ability to add new words and categories - £8 ($10 US)
- CrosWord - A crossword puzzle creator and player - £8 ($10 US)
- CallCalc - Telephone call timer, cost calculator & logger - £10 ($15 US)

SPECIAL OFFER: Purchase the complete set of 5 programs for only £23 ($30 US), saving a massive 50%! (Only if purchased as a single transaction).

Registration can be made via CompuServe, RegNet or by sending a cheque to the address below. Full registration details provided with each program.

All programs available from CompuServe, CIX or 3-Lib. You can also download the most recent versions from my Web site - http://ourworld.compuserve.com:80/homepages/groucho/ or by sending a SAE plus 3.5" disc to M.Avey, 39 Union Street, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 2JN UK

Only £10 each on your own 3.5" PC floppy disk (inc. p&p) or £13 on your own SSD including registered delivery



```
01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10   NUMBERS
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20   SO FAR:
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30     32
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50   LATEST:
51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60
61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70     24
71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80
81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90
```

Payment by
cheque/postal
order (payable to
M D Shuckford)

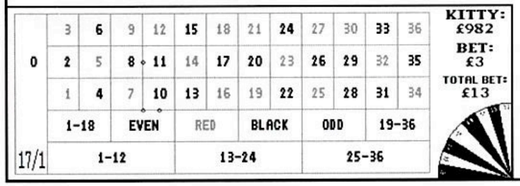
Roulette and Bingo for the Psion

Roulette (3a/3c only)

- Change/delete bets
- Place multiple bets
- Wheel spin graphics
- Full auto-saving of games
- Double/halve/multiply your bets

Bingo

- Full bingo simulator for the Series 3/3a/3c
- Full 90 numbers displayed on screen
- Check last number(s) called



```
     3   6   9  12  15  18  21  24  27  30  33  36   KITTY:
                                                      £982
 0   2   5   8  11  14  17  20  23  26  29  32  35   BET:
                                                      £3
     1   4   7  10  13  16  19  22  25  28  31  34   TOTAL BET:
                                                      £13
      1-18   EVEN   RED   BLACK   ODD   19-36
17/1      1-12         13-24         25-36
```

Contact:
M D Shuckford
75 North Quay
Great Yarmouth
Norfolk NR30 1JF
Tel: (01493) 856864 or 855648
Mobile: (0468) 360764

Adventure Pack 1

The Lost
TREASURES
of Infocom
INCLUDES THE 5 ORIGINAL ZORK HITS
20 CAPTIVATING GAMES
A Fortune in Interactive Mystery, Fantasy and Science Fiction Adventures!
INFOCOM

Whether you prefer fantasy, horror, science fiction or mystery and suspense, Adventure Pack I will provide you with many enjoyable hours of amusement (and frustration) as you visit the underground world of **Zork**, delve into the **Hitchhiker's Guide**, and of course explore the original **Collossal Cave** Adventure.

Adventure Pack I comprises Infozip - The Infocom Interpreter for the Series 3/3a/3c, Infostat (for those who must cheat), Colossal Cave Adventure and Curses...

As "Curses" opens, you're hunting about in the attic of your family home, looking for a tatty old map of Paris (you're going on holiday tomorrow) and generally trying to avoid all the packing. Aunt Jemima is potting daisies and sulking; the attics are full of endless distractions and secrets; Greek myths, horoscopes, sixth-century politics, a less than altogether helpful demon, a mysterious bomb plot, photography, ritual, poetry and a dream or two all get in your way; and somehow you keep being reminded of your family through the ages, and all its Curses...

...could it be that even you are Cursed?

Also included

LOST TREASURES OF INFOCOM 1

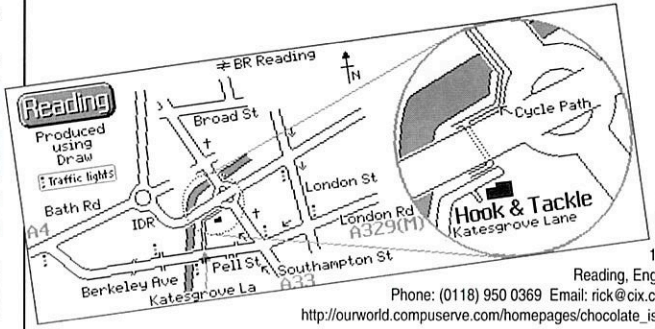
19 more adventures for
your Series 3/3a/3c

Zork I, II, III	Ballyhoo
Enchanter	Starcross
Sorcerer	Moonmist
Spellbreaker	Planetfall
Deadline	Stationfall
Witness	Suspended
Suspect	Lurking Horror
Infidel	Beyond Zork
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy	

Interdata Developments
6 Okeover Road, Salford M7 4JX
tel: 0161-7922871 fax: 0161-7922114

Chocolate Island Software

DRAW



For more info,
please contact:
Rick Andrews
16 Alpine Street
Reading, England RG1 2QA
Phone: (0118) 950 0369 Email: rick@cix.compulink.co.uk
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/chocolate_island_software/

The best-selling shareware bitmap editor for the Psion Series 3a - only £10

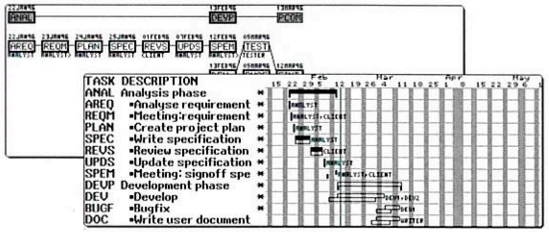
Real-time Zoom, Pattern fill, Variable width lines, Undo and more

Print to Epson, IBM, Canon and HP printers

Plan

Project Planning on the Psion 3a/3c

- **View & update your project plans, anywhere, anytime**
- **Enter tasks, dependencies and resource details**
- **Gantt & Pert charts**
- **Calculate end dates**
- **Track progress**
- **Interface to MS Project**
- **Shareware - £15**



TASK	DESCRIPTION
ANAL	Analysis phase
AREQ	•Analyse requirement
REQM	•Meeting:requirement
PLAN	•Create project plan
SPEC	•Write specification
REVS	•Review specification
UPDS	•Update specification
SPEM	•Meeting: signoff spe
DEVP	Development phase
DEV	•Develop
BUGF	•Bugfix
DOC	•Write user document

Also available - advanced Psion OPL programming tools:

OPP	Extends the OPL language ('C' style preprocessor, 'C' style structures, multi-dimensional arrays,...). Psion and PC versions (can be used from an MSDOS prompt or with ODE) - £10.
OPPDBG	Runtime source level debugger for OPL programs - £10.

Plan, OPP and OPPDBG are publicly available as shareware from WWW, CompuServe, CIX, Psion FTP and BBS sites, or by sending a 3.5" disk to the address below:

Andy Clarkson, 3 Ashmead Drive, Hardwick, Cambridgeshire CB3 7XT UK.

Telephone: +44 (0)1954 210899 E-mail: 100661.2440@compuserve.com

WWW: http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/andyc

LATEST NEWS! Siena versions of most programs also available

Alan Richey's Shareware Software

"All the software you need to run your life !!"

S3ABANK Personal Accounts Suite

Registration Fee
£20 (30US$)

Accounts

The most comprehensive Shareware financial package available for the Psion 3a and 3c, with well over 1000 registered users. As well as the usual financial functions including full Quicken compatibility, both import and export, this program also includes (for free) the following five standalone programs as fully-integrated optional modules.

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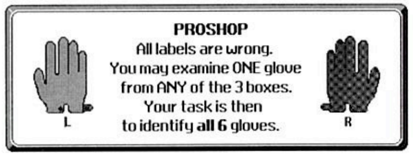

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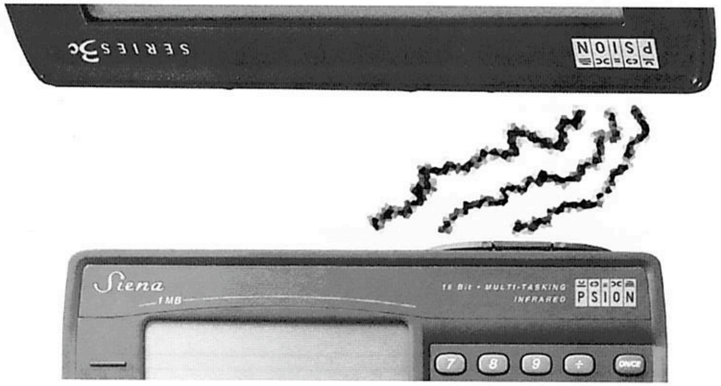

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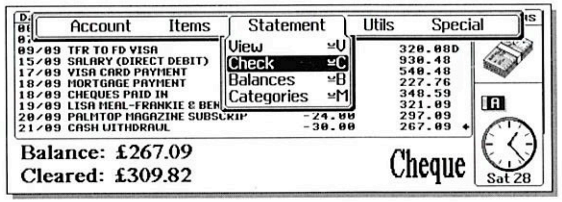

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15/09 SALARY (DIRECT DEBIT)                       930.48
17/09 VISA CARD PAYMENT                           540.48
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Balance: £267.09
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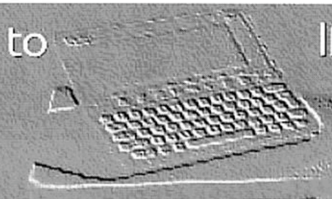

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Next Issue...

Planned for issue 10:

- A look at units conversion software—the article we couldn't squeeze into this issue.
- Data exchange with your Psion. We couldn't fit it into this issue, but we've now expanded the article even further!
- Living with ACT!—an in-depth user's perspective of this powerful contact manager.
- Connecting your Psion to an Apple Macintosh computer—the second in our new series on non-PC connectivity.
- *Masses* of reviews: Psion Agenda Synchroniser, Personal Expenses, TimeBase 6, Notepad Deluxe, Toolkit II, and anything else that's released in time!
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